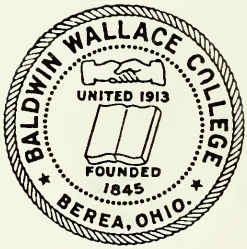
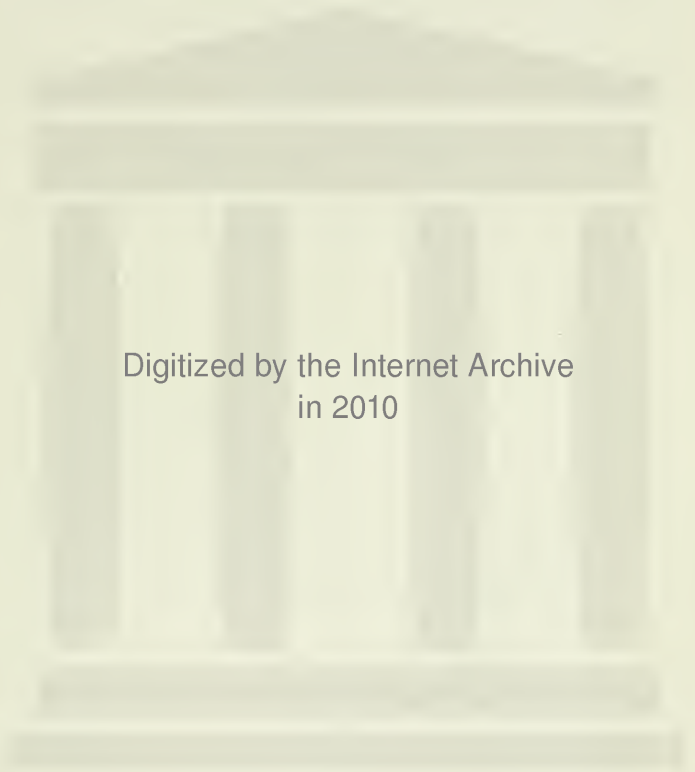
Ex Libris



Ritter Library

Baldwin-Wallace College

Berea, Ohio



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010

http://www.archive.org/details/alphonsemuchahis00much

ALPHONSE

MUCHA

NOVELS BY

JIRI MUCHA

The Bridge

The Problems of Lieutenant Knap

Scorched Crop

N
6838
.M8
M79

ALPHONSE MUCHA

His Life and Art

by his son

JIRI MUCHA

Research by M. K.

HUMANITIES PRESS

RITTER LIBRARY
BALDWIN-WALLACE COLLEGE

First published in U.S.A. 1967
by Humanities Press Inc.
303 Park Avenue South
New York 10, N.Y.

First published 1966
© Jiri Mucha, 1966
Translation © William Heinemann Ltd, 1966

Printed in Great Britain by
Butler & Tanner Ltd, Frome and London

67-1504
1-10-68
Art

Illustrations

facing page

Alphonse Mucha as a young man 8

Count Khuen's Castle at Gandegg 9

Mucha, Dědina and Ženíšek pose for an execution scene 9

Mucha in bed at the rue du Val de Grâce 24

At work, rue de la Grande Chaumière 24

Mucha with Anna la Javannaise 25

Gauguin at the harmonium in Mucha's studio 25

Models in the studio, 1896–1903 72

Models in the studio, 1896–1903 73

Sarah Bernhardt (*by Courtesy of the Grosvenor Gallery*) 88

'Summer' and 'Autumn'. From the 'Four Seasons' decorative panels 89

between pages 144–5

Mucha with Berthe de Lalande

Mucha in his famous Russian shirt

'Rose' and 'Carnation'. From the 'Flowers' decorative panels

'Iris' and 'Lily'. From the 'Flowers' decorative panels

Study of nude with stockings (*by Courtesy of the Grosvenor Gallery*)

M. Freund-Deschamps with his daughter 200

At work, Paris, rue du Val de Grâce 201

The studio, rue du Val de Grâce 201

facing page

Lettering by Mucha from a book of letter designs 216

Study for a poster 216

Alberto Santos-Dumont dressed for take-off (*Radio Times Hulton Picture Library*) 217

Santos-Dumont sets off for the Eiffel Tower from St Cloud (*Radio Times Hulton Picture Library*) 217

Mucha with Rodin on a tour of Bohemia 248

Maruška at Mucha's studio 249

The Sarah Bernhardt poster for *Lorenzaccio* (*Grosvenor Gallery*) 264

Leslie Carter 265

Mucha's Val de Grâce studio 312

Mucha with Maruška 312

Mme Mucha in New York 313

Mucha body, Tiffany wings (*by Courtesy of Robert Koch Esq.*) 328

Mucha and family 329

Acknowledgements

Being neither a historian nor a scholar, I would have never succeeded in writing this book without the help of those authors and friends who have dedicated years of conscientious research to the subjects I deal with. As I can hardly decide to whom I am more indebted, I have to resort to naming them in alphabetical order, with warmest gratitude for all the information they provided me with:

Mr Mario Amaya, Monsieur Michel Bourrelier, Professor Jindřich Čadík, Mr John O. Crane, Mr Salvador Dali, Mr Bengt Danielsson, Mademoiselle Andrée David, Mr Eric Estorick, Monsieur Jean Fouquet, Monsieur Roger H. Guerrand, Mr Geoffrey T. Hellman, Mr Robert Koch, Mr Robert Melville, Mr Brian Reade, Monsieur Maurice Rheims, Mr Eliot Stein, Mr Dixon Wecter, Mr Edward E. Wilson

J. M.

To Aragon

1

My father's family lived for centuries in the small South Moravian town of Ivančice. The local records first mention a certain Mucha, a wine grower, in the year 1488; older records perished in the flames of the many wars that raged over central Europe in the Middle Ages. It is probable, however, that his ancestors were at Ivančice at the time of its foundation in 936 and almost certain that they came to that hilly region during the fourth century from the Pripet Marshes. All families are as old as hills. Even before the rivers had formed our landscape, they were there, toiling, hoping, dying, shivering in dumb silence round the camp-fire, unknown shadows, forefathers of us all. How far do the roots of anybody's genealogical tree reach? To the primeval rock, hundreds of thousands of years back, where the only history was survival. Out of this darkness we all came, no matter how glorious or insignificant our immediate ancestors were. We are all survivors of the same long and deadly trek.

Since I was born when my father was fifty-five, I only really knew him as a grey-haired old gentleman. I liked him very much, but there was little contact between us. He was too wise, I was too young. I did not even know what questions to ask him. Both my grandfather and great-grandfather had children late in life. Great-grandfather was born when George Washington took Yorktown in 1781. Came the French Revolution followed by the

Napoleonic Wars, there was no question of starting a family and his son Andreas was born only in 1825. My grandfather had no time to get married as a young man either. First he had to spend seven years with the Imperial army and married for the first time when Napoleon III was crowned Emperor of the French and the Crimean War broke out.

Little of these historical events was heard of in Ivančice. A century ago the world was broken up into small circles of local news and only the most important items were retransmitted from district to district, distorted more and more until they became nothing but a distant legend. Earthquakes destroyed towns, cannibals devoured travellers, sailing boats were wrecked and Indians took white scalps. Ivančice had other worries and nobody knew of them either.

More than 200 years had gone by since the disastrous Battle of the White Mountain, when Bohemia and Moravia lost their independence and their religion, and there was still no hope of any improvement. No sooner had religion ceased to play the decisive role and persecuted Protestantism became tolerated than nationalism arose to take over the old means for a new purpose. The heretical Czech language, though no longer proscribed by the Church, was now proscribed by the State. After 1848, the Austrian Monarchy, instead of adapting itself to the national composition of its Empire, preferred a compromise by establishing the two-headed Austria-Hungary, split the task of holding down the Slav majority between the Germans and Hungarians and hoped to solve its problems by a policy of intensive Germanization.

South of Ivančice, the German territory started. It was like a front bulging northwards towards the German

bridgehead at Brno and the other front advancing southwards from Prussia. In Ivančice there was literally house-to-house fighting to maintain a Czech school, to hold a seat on the town council, to keep property in Czech hands. Fundamentally it was the same passionate struggle for human rights that is now proceeding in the United States between black and white—except that the world did not take so much notice.

In Ivančice, once a centre of learning, the two leaders of the national movement were V. Novotný, headmaster of the school, and the priest, Metoděj Kulda. Josef Václav Novotný (1828–95) taught Father at the local school and was, with his unorthodox methods, partly responsible for Father's readiness to accept the ideas of Ruskin and William Morris, when he encountered them thirty years later. They fitted in with his conception of national art and, more as a result of an optical illusion than in actual fact, he found himself in the same orbit as their followers. He nevertheless belonged to a different solar system and returned to it as soon as the power of attraction waned.

Beneš Metoděj Kulda (1820–1903) eventually became a canon at Vyšehrad Minster. The inhabitants of Ivančice looked upon him as their most famous son, and in the eyes of my grandmother Amalia he was an ideal to whom she would refer longingly whenever the question of her son's future came under discussion. She wanted Father to become a priest, not because she was a pious soul but because a priest had unlimited opportunities for influencing people. Czech history had produced a singular paradox. In the seventeenth century the Catholic Church had been a Germanizing force. Czech books had been placed on the Index because they contained heretical ideas and to conceal the Czech Bible—which, incidentally, had first been

printed at Ivančice—was an offence incurring severe punishment. In the nineteenth century the situation was reversed. The Czech Reawakening was in part the work of humble Catholic priests who, with the teachers, were the only bearers of culture in the villages. Although they remained irreconcilable opponents of Protestantism, they associated themselves with the national development at the point where the Catholic Church had interrupted it, and thus continued willy-nilly in the Protestant tradition. The loyalty to Rome, weak as it was, became still weaker in the consciousness of the people, and priests were more respected on account of their secular activity than their clerical work. Kulda was a typical patriot-priest, and my grandmother Amalia strove to induce her son to follow in his footsteps. Even though this did not come about, Father retained his childhood affection for priests, continuing to see them as the bearers of enlightened ideas, even when, during his long stay abroad, their role again changed.

Father was born on St James's Day, 24 July 1860, in an old stone building adjoining the District Court. The house was divided into two parts; one half was occupied by the Mucha family, the other was the local jail. When grandfather Andreas returned from serving in the Imperial army, his share of the vineyard was too small for him to live on. He obtained the post of court usher, married and had three children, Aloisia, Antonia and August. Soon, however, his first wife died of tuberculosis.

At that time the daughter of a miller from Budišov, Amalia Malá, was living in Vienna as governess to an aristocratic family. She had no desire to marry and spent all her free time reading, going to theatres and museums, and in prayer. She attended all the lessons of her wards,

she helped them with their homework and read the classics with them; by the age of thirty-five she was thus unusually well educated, refined and full of noble aspirations. She might have remained single till the end of her life if an angel had not appeared to her one night in a dream. The heavenly visitor came up to her bed and bade her: 'Take care of the poor orphans.' The following morning she received a letter from Moravia. It was written by an old relative who reminded her that she ought to be giving serious thought to marriage. There was somebody she had in mind for her—a good and handsome man, a civil servant at Ivančice, a widower with three children who needed a mother.

Amalia had never doubted that her destiny was directed by the Will of God. She obeyed the angel and set out for Moravia by what was then a new means of transport, the railway. At Brno she got out of the carriage, a small, thin woman, with dark hair parted down the middle, an intelligent forehead and deep blue eyes. She wore a travelling costume with flounces and lace, in the latest Viennese fashion, and held a travelling basket in her hand, tied up with a ribbon. A man three years her junior, with an erect military posture and black whiskers, stepped up to her. He wore light check trousers, a close-fitting three-quarter-length coat, and a silk tie round his neck. She stretched out her hand to him. He kissed it and offered her his arm. They left the station and disappeared into the town. That same year, 1858, they were married in Budišov church.

Like all the other children, my father was given a name beginning with A. Why it was Alphonse and not Adam, or Alfred, I don't know. At his mother's request he was also given the name Maria. Two sisters, Anna and Angela, followed in quick succession. There were now six children

living in the small house next to the jail—three of them tubercular—the two parents, and a maid. Remarkably enough, not only did Andreas Mucha, the court usher, succeed in maintaining such a large household on his small salary, but he also made sure that all his children received at least a secondary education. It was a desperate effort to escape the vicious circle of social inferiority. The most insignificant of clerks was still a cut above a peasant or wine grower, even if he were ten times poorer. To hang on, to refuse to slip back, meant leaning on one's children. Once they were educated and settled in a job, the curse was broken, the social level achieved. It must have been a bitter disappointment for grandfather Andreas to see that one by one all the sacrifices proved in vain. No sooner were his children by his first wife independent than they died, and his only son by his second wife took up painting, an occupation which at that time was on the extreme edge of respectability. 'One of these days Alphonse will be eaten by lice,' he would prophesy gloomily to his friends, seeing his son casually dressed in a paint-spattered cape. Nevertheless, when he realized that his efforts to hold him down to respectable employment led nowhere, he gave up the struggle. Basically, he was a peasant: God gave, God took away.

My father was born with all the necessary equipment to become a painter. He drew even before he learnt to walk, and his mother would tie a pencil round his neck with a coloured ribbon so that he could draw as he crawled on the floor. Each time he lost the pencil, he would start howling. His first memory was a sight of unusual beauty: one day, as he was lying in his cradle, he woke up, opened

his eyes and saw a wonderful, glittering tangle of lights. It was a Christmas tree decorated with lighted candles. The whole arrangement of lights and shadows was stamped in his memory, together with the excitement it aroused in him at the time.

Like so many other painters, Father was born left-handed. For six years, before he started going to school, he pegged away at drawing. He used anything and everything that left a visible mark on a clean surface: a pencil, chalk, coal, or a nail. On one occasion, to punish him, his mother put him in a corner at the back of the stove. He grabbed a piece of coal that had fallen out and drew martial scenes on the white wall. He so ravaged a polished cupboard near the window with his drawings that it had to be moved before it was a total ruin. His mother would take him with her when she went shopping; the child prodigy would get a piece of paper, settle down in a corner, and to the astonishment of all present sketch the well-known personalities of the town. With his left hand.

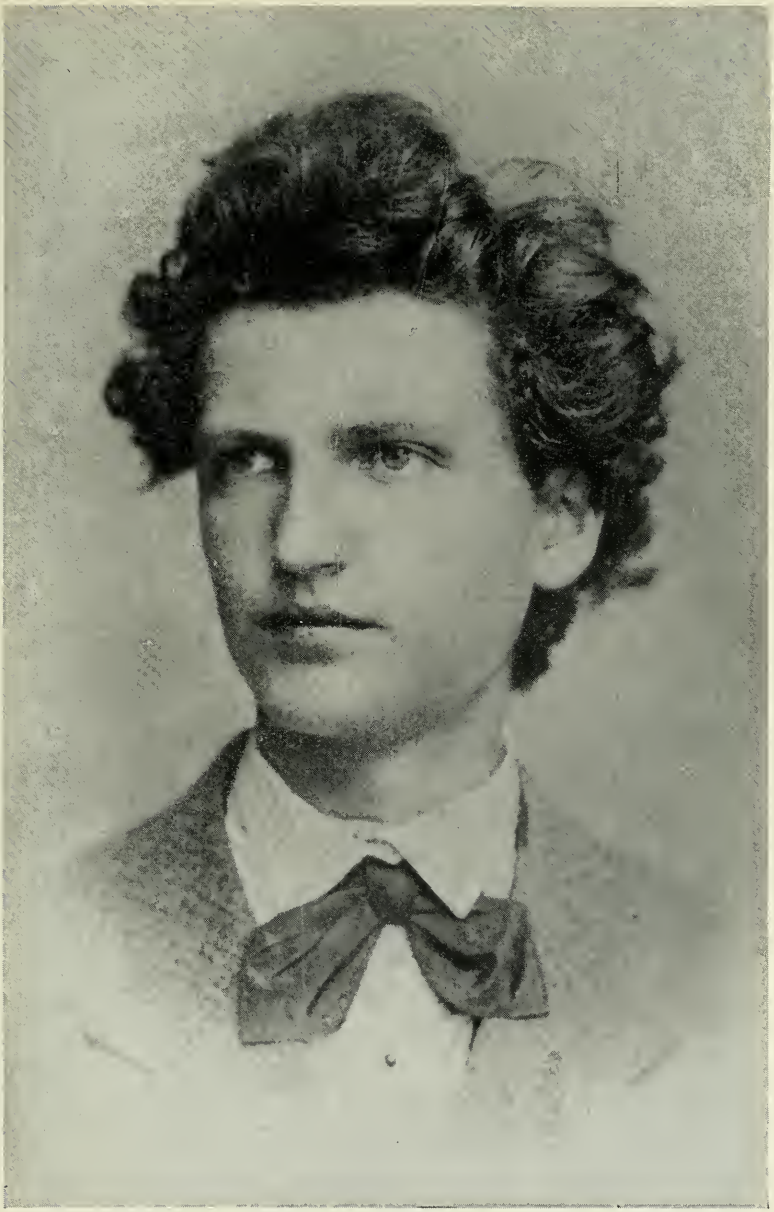
His first contact with art, however, was through music. It was common practice in Moravia for a child to start learning the violin as soon as he was able to hold it. Furthermore every church, even the very smallest, had its children's choir which would render the complicated mass under the direction of the schoolmaster throughout the year. As father had a beautiful alto voice, he had in addition to the violin to practice singing.

> Our violin teacher [Father relates] was the old rector. When school was over we would sit down on the benches, and scrape away all at the same time. He would sit facing us, and when anybody played a wrong note he would give him a sharp tap with the bow across the fingers. We scraped, he biffed and so it went on. In the winter when the snow fell, we would scamper

out of the town and use our violins as toboggans. We would sit on them and speed down a hollow. The bridge came off at the first go, but we had fun.

We went to school from eight till eleven, and from two till four. Then we fiddled. Before we began, the door would open and the rector's daughter would bring him a mug of coffee and a large slice of bread. We would stand and watch him eat. He always used to have rolls, until one day he found a cockroach in one of them and ever since he would only eat bread for fear of cockroaches.

This was his first contact with art, a practical one—nothing amateurish. Art was a craft that one pursued not because one liked it but because it was part of the daily routine. From the age of ten Father had to keep himself entirely by singing at St Peter's Church at Brno, so as to be able to go to the grammar school. It was natural that with the church taking up so much of his time it should have had a profound influence on his sensibility. From his earliest years he lived in two worlds. One was the life in the yard of the court-building near the old jail, a place which filled the other children with apprehension and curiosity, the other was the church where with a handful of the élite he participated in that great performance staged before the eyes of the faithful with all the glitter of vestments, burning candles, the peal of the organ and, as the golden chalice is raised, the mysterious tinkling of bells. A baroque church is a vast stage designed to crush and elevate at the same time. It was initiated as a powerful instrument of the Jesuit missions to convert heretics and pagans to the true faith. In countries where Catholicism is taken for granted, the baroque church does not have this aggressive splendour, everything about it is more tranquil and less ecstatic. The Czech baroque, whose mission was to rout Protestant Hussitism, has parallels in Mexico or



Alphonse Mucha as a young man, c. 1883

Count Khuen's Castle at Gandegg, Tyrol

Mucha, Dědina and Ženíšek pose for an execution scene, Paris, c. 1891

South America where the Jesuits had a similar task. From Bohemia it even took with it its most successful symbols; St John Nepomuk and the Bambino di Praga.

'For me,' Father once wrote, 'the notions of painting, going to church, and music are so closely knit that I often cannot decide whether I like church for its music, or music for its place in the mystery which it accompanies.'

He was reticent about his past, especially his years of fame. What I know I have mostly had to discover from his correspondence and from foreign sources. It was only his childhood and youth that he enjoyed talking about in his graphic style, full of irony and humour as soon as he felt that reminiscing could rouse his emotions. He was deeply sensitive but not sentimental, especially towards himself. At the same time he was an excellent raconteur, and if he set his mind to it he could write very well. Sometimes passages from his letters and accounts are far more valuable as a means of understanding his style than learned comparisons. This is how, in a letter to my mother, written from New York before his wedding, he describes his childhood impressions in church at Easter time:

> I used to kneel for hours as an acolyte in front of Christ's grave. It was in a dark alcove covered with flowers heavy with intoxicating fragrance, and wax candles were burning quietly all round with a sort of sacred light which illuminated from below the martyred body of Christ, life-size, hanging on the wall in utmost sadness. At my back I felt the presence of the motionless guard. They were infantrymen detailed to Christ's grave, standing in their gold-braided blue trousers with rifles and glistening helmets like statues in utter silence. Not a sound in the church, only the scraping of shoes on the stone floor as the old women and children came in; the rustle of clothing as they bent over the dead body of Christ, kissed it, 'pop', went a penny into the pewter dish. How I loved to kneel there with hands clasped in

prayer. No one in front of me, only the wooden Christ hanging on the wall; no one who could see me shutting my eyes and thinking of God knows what and imagining that I am kneeling on the edge of a mysterious unknown future.

Thirty years later Paul Redonnel wrote in *La Plume* about Mucha's studio: 'It makes the impression of a secular chapel . . . screens placed here and there, that could well be confessionals; and then there's incense burning all the time. It's more like the chapel of an oriental monk than a studio.'

That studio which resembled a chapel with its burning incense was not an eccentric touch of *fin de siècle* sophistication but rather the realization of the dream of a child who had seen the church as the pinnacle of attainable beauty. In another letter, written from Paris, in 1904, he describes an experience during Advent when he went to sing in the early morning before the long winter night gave way to dawn.

People arrived in the darkness, wading through the deep snow from all the surrounding sleeping villages. They entered the dimly-lit church, their heads wrapped in shawls, old women, old men, boys and girls, their faces lit from below by the candles they carried in their hands, breath from their mouths condensing on their woollen scarves. The children with sleepy eyes and red cheeks were gazing at the church, lit by hundreds of tiny flames. Now the bells at the altar tinkle, the schoolmaster wearing red woollen mittens gets his stiff fingers going on the frozen organ and the first chords roar out like the sound of creation . . . Then silence; then again singing in the cold with hands in pockets, red noses and the breath streaming from our mouths like steam. You could almost see the steam carrying our singing over the candles to heaven. More and more peasants would arrive knocking the snow off their boots and squeezing in among the other sheepskin coats or sidling into a pew. Gradually the windows became blue, until you could see the frosty morning and the snow-covered

roofs of the nearby houses. The singing ceased, the organ stopped playing, the candles burned out, the altar darkened. Gradually everyone disappeared into the blue winter day. I stayed alone in the organ-loft, the golden-reddish gleam of the candles vanished; and I felt that night had died and a new day was being born, resurrecting the carved saints glowing a while ago with red candle-light but now sunk in darkness. This went on throughout December, the nights getting longer and longer and each time I heard the moaning and the painful, hopeful muttering of the crowd in the dark, red glow of candles, it made my heart almost stand still with sadness.

The first historical event in which my father took an active part was the Austro-Prussian War of 1866—short and disastrous for the Monarchy. After the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, Prussia under Bismarck invaded Bohemia and Moravia from the north and, supported by Italy in the south, drove the Austrian troops in headlong defeat. It was a dress rehearsal for the defeat of France in 1870. As chance would have it, members of my family, both on my mother's side and my father's side, were involved in this war in different ways and on different fronts. The Prussian army was led by a distant cousin on my mother's side, General von Moltke; another cousin Baron Friedberg, was a field marshal in the Imperial army. The principal battle was fought near Sádová, a small château belonging to another branch of the same family, and while Austrian officers were rushing helplessly through the passages of our ancestral manor house at Chrudim with maps in their hands wailing, 'Christ! Where the hell is Königgratz?' my father was hiding with some of the Ivančice kids behind a hayrick in a field, firing noisy shots at the advancing Prussian army with a key stuffed with gunpowder. The enemy occupied the town, and there was no

school. Blue, red, yellow and gold-glittering soldiers camped in the square and all the courtyards. Hussars galloped along the streets on horseback, artillerymen rushed past with six pairs of horses dragging field guns, grenadiers drank brandy round roaring fires, and officers in splendid uniforms rode off on foaming stallions to the hills and surveyed the countryside through a long telescope. My father was born just in time to gaze on and remember the last glorious pageant of ancient wars. Every moment was like a scene come to life from Géricault, Gros or Delacroix. But as the occupation wore on, the uniforms began to fade, the soldiers' faces grew thick with dirty beards, a cholera epidemic broke out, and their yellowish, emaciated bodies were thrown in scores into common graves outside the town. That was the other side of war—Callot, Goya. The children saw this too, because there was no school.

2

'As a child I was continuously preoccupied with observing, even though I might seem to be gazing into a void. In this field I always found enough work . . . I faithfully noted everything that was out of the ordinary, whether by drawing or painting it, or merely being conscious of it.' Although he had no idea then that painting could be anything more than a game, he was attracted by every activity connected with it.

> He would go to look at the decorators [his sisters relate] as they were painting the rooms in the fashion of the day with various baroque and rococo embellishments. He would stand for hours on end watching the Ivančice potters turning their characteristic clay vessels on wheels in their homes. His great day came when the fiesta was held at St James's Chapel on the hill overlooking the town. The confectioners would bake gingerbread hearts, hussars and dolls and once these had been put to cool on long planks, Alphonse would be called in to decorate them with ornaments and inscriptions, squeezing coloured icing-sugar through a cornet.

The fiesta was the one great distraction enjoyed by the country people in a monotonous round of endless working days. There was the local one on the patron saint's day, the ones in the neighbouring villages and finally the national ones, usually in places where pilgrimages had been held from pagan times. The Emperor, Joseph II, whose enlightened despotism was rather indiscriminate,

came to the conclusion that with so many fiestas and pilgrimages the country folk had no time for work. He aimed to rectify this by a stroke of the pen: all fiestas were abolished and instead there was to be a single one, on the day of St Joseph. The result was inevitable—people merely added one more, the Imperial fiesta, to all the others. Father adored going to these outdoor festivities. He was thrilled by the stalls, the colourful and richly embroidered costumes of the villagers, the crowds of people, the services when those unable to get inside the church gathered outside on the grass and knelt down, a field of white blouses, red kerchiefs and saffron, blue or black skirts. All along the road to the chapel were stalls with cherries, wine, gherkins, sweets, toys, beer, sausages and rosaries. There was also an old woman who used to sit behind an upturned basket selling little neatly arranged heaps of plums, ten for a penny.

Crowds of people churned up the dust on the road, till everything was grey. Only the heaps of plums retained their beautiful glitter. This surprised me and I kept my eyes on them till I saw how it was done: the old woman, whenever they got dusty, would pop them one after the other into her toothless mouth, give them a good suck and place them back on the heap nice and shiny.

When he was seven, Father made his first journey. Aloisia, his half-sister, took him on a pilgrimage to the fiesta at Tuřany.

Aloisie came home full of the news that Mařka Novotná, Žofka Balcarová and Ančka Procházková had already been given permission to go and were busy looking up the most important item: a box to be carried full of food in a cloth on their backs. The pilgrimage was to last two and a half days: the procession set off on the Friday, spent Saturday at the fiesta and returned home covered in glory on the Sunday. When all the boxes were filled with cakes and buns our procession left from the main

church accompanied by the priest to the outskirts of the town. From there we went alone, but as soon as we got into the fields the entire company sat down and took off their shoes. They would only be put on again just before the next village. Rajmund, the cobbler, led the singing and he would first recite at the top of his voice a verse of the prayer, then the whole procession sang it hymn after hymn, from village to village. Finally Rajmund struck up the most glorious hymn he knew and led us into the last church just as high mass was about to begin. I remained standing with my sister in the crowd at the door, the organ pealed out its heavenly chords, everything faded from my sight and only an angelic being in lace and embroidery remained at the organ, her hands drawing forth magical sounds. At least so it seemed to me. I stood on tiptoe and looked around, but could not see my beautiful angel. Even today I remember my vision and the magical impression which this unseen feminine appearance made on me. It was probably an old schoolteacher peering at the music through his wire-rimmed spectacles. But this I never wanted to find out, for fear it might destroy my altar and its angel.

My father finished at the elementary school at the age of eleven and was to go on to the grammar school at Brno. But grandfather Andreas's salary would not run to this after paying for the education of three children. Help came from Vollberger, the music teacher, who advised him that such a good chorister ought to go to Father Křížkovský (1820–85), the famous composer of church music at the convent of Old Brno. There he could be maintained as a foundation scholar. Armed with a letter of recommendation from Vollberger, father and son set off for the Moravian capital. Křížkovský took the young candidate over to the piano and tested him carefully. He was evidently pleased with the result, but just as he was about to offer him the only free place in the convent, a young man, eighteen years of age, came in. 'I've just taken on a

new foundation scholar,' he told Křížkovský, 'an excellent alto.' Křížkovský sighed and turned to the father and son who stood disappointed in the middle of the room. 'This young man is my new deputy, Leoš Janáček.'

However, it was no great misfortune, Křížkovský recommended them to his colleague Nesvadba, who was choirmaster at St Peter's. Here my father spent four years as a member of the choir, receiving in return board and lodging and twopence a week for paraffin. The lads had to clean the room, make their beds, see to the stove, get up at dawn as soon as the church bell rang for mass, go off to school and spend the rest of the day at choir practice. Father and another boy called Dolina were the best in the choir and were loaned to other churches whenever solo voices were required and they therefore had very little time for amusement or homework. None the less the time Father spent at St Peter's left him with deep and happy memories. Janáček, who was choirboy at the Old Brno Convent, seems to have enjoyed it much less:

> Blue boys! That was the name by which we boys of the Thurn Vallsassina foundation were known throughout Brno, because of our pale blue, white-bordered uniforms. Neglected, but guarded; in moments of loneliness we looked out of the barred windows. From the Prelates' garden, the birds flew for the crumbs which we threw to them. Small blue birds, blue like us, but freer than our kind.
>
> Every day we practised singing and piano playing as well as our own particular instruments. There was also quartet and ensemble practice. The wind instrument players helped each other out with technical problems. We had an old tradition to live up to. The 'Blues' were known all over Brno. Their music was welcome at concerts given for ministers and other worthies. They lent a hand in the theatre orchestra; no church choir could do without their help. They even played at aristocratic balls and

were brought daily into the refectory after the roast had been served. Every day at table and every Sunday at Divine Service—and many more occasions. It is the more amazing when you consider that each 'Blue' was either a student of philosophy or logic or a pupil attending the grammar or ordinary class where it was also necessary to study diligently.

Leoš Janáček (1854–1928), who was six years older, was already conducting on his own when my father and Dolina were called in to help under his baton at Old Brno. Subsequently the difference in age began to even out, and Janáček became one of the regulars at the future digs at Panenská Street. Then their ways parted, the age difference disappeared entirely, and only mutual respect remained from their boyhood friendship.

Maestro, my opera, *The Excursions of Mister Brouček*—one to the moon, the other into the fifteenth century—is shortly due from the printers [Janáček wrote to my father]. The publishers, Universal Editions, would like very much to have the frontispiece in two or three colours. I must tell you frankly that I would indeed like to have your work on the front page. But can I ask you such a thing? Universal Editions is looking for a young painter and offering 100 crowns! That's all it can run to! It's difficult indeed to come to you with this request! But do advise me at least as to whom I could approach. With kind regards. Your devoted Leoš Janáček. Brno, 14 April 1919.

Father spoke of his choral days with nostalgia:

The bells of St Peter's have a glorious sound, especially the big bell. It rings out together with a smaller one called the Swedish bell which proclaims to the town every day as it has for the past three hundred years, that the Swedes have been driven out of the land. In the school holidays, when we foundation scholars were more free, we used to ring the bells for physical exercise. But we were obliged to stay at St Peter's, as we had to continue with our routine. The day would start with the bell ringing and the early morning mass; in the afternoon there would

be a funeral, the procession passing through the noisiest streets of the town, with us choirboys taking part in it *ad majorem Dei gloriam.* We also took part in the sung masses with all their intricate ritual, not only at our own church but also at the Capuchins', St Joseph's, the Minorites' and at the Old Brno Convent where Křížkovský strove to maintain the liturgy in all its classic purity. There the modernists, Janáček in particular, blazed their new paths which neither Křížkovský nor Nesvadba could approve of. The most beautiful experience of all was the early morning service on Christmas Day which elsewhere takes place at midnight but at St Peter's was celebrated at four in the morning to enable the people from the surrounding villages to attend. The church would be shrouded in darkness and only the windows with their bizarre design would shine out peacefully into the night. Inside the church darkness filled every corner, the vaulting dully lit by candlelight and the entire space under the gallery twinkling with the flames of wax candles. People came in, wrapped in furs and smock-coats, the women with shawls on their heads, their lanterns casting a magical glow on their frozen faces. By now the church was full and sparkling with quiet happiness and holy joy. Subdued, simple carols would issue from the choir, as from heaven, and every chord, every tone penetrated deep into the heart, into the soul, filling it with yearning and love. 'Why are you crying?'—'I don't know, nothing hurts.' Such are the tears of love . . .

After three years came the inevitable end. My father's singing grew harsh, he could not reach the high notes and occasionally he emitted a deep uncontrollable croak. The breaking of his voice meant he had to bid the church farewell and become an ordinary mortal. Deeply upset by this demotion, he moved into the town. With his schoolmate, Julek Štantejský from Ústí nad Orlicí, he found a room in one of the most ill-famed of Brno's streets, ironically named Panenská—Virgin—Street.

Number 3 was paved with cobble-stones. Our room was tucked away in the corner and it had a door leading into the yard and a

window next to the lavatory. We had one and a half beds, one with four legs, the other with two. We propped it up with a trunk and when one of us got tired sleeping on it we changed over. There were also two chairs and a table, but no cupboard. We would have had nothing to put in it anyway. As we were gay and cheerful, the neighbours used to invite us for an occasional meal and every day the other boys from our school would drop in to see us. Sometimes we were as many as fifteen in our little room—sitting on the beds, or sprawling on top of one another, all puffing away at our long clay pipes. Since we couldn't open the window because of the lavatory, the air was so thick that you could hang axes on it. I did homework for the boys, and they in turn brought us tobacco and food. All our provisions we shared equally. I got a loaf of bread every week from home, Julek a pot of dripping every month. We divided the loaf into daily rations with a piece of chalk and ate it with the dripping. Towards the end, however, as the loaf was round, the slices got smaller and smaller and our meals thinner and thinner.

Across the yard lived the future writers the Mrštík brothers (Alois Mrštík 1861–1925, Vilém Mrštík 1863–1912). Their father was a cobbler with a deep bass voice and a tough beard under his chin. When he spoke he could be heard all over the house, especially when he was bawling at his sons. In a room above us lived a certain Boček, student at the teachers' institute, who wrote poetry and composed scurrilous ditties about the neighbours. He would sing them on the balcony, twanging his violin like a guitar, and everyone came out to hear the malicious slander he poured out in his songs. Once we induced him to select the best ones and sing them with us in the streets. It was a success and we started singing regularly in the streets and collecting money. It was a gay, healthy life and we would eat our bread and dripping as we went along. For breakfast and supper we had water.

Father completed his fourth year at the grammar school without much success, and grandfather Andreas was no longer willing to maintain him at school. It was decided that he should return to Ivančice. Julek Štantejský proposed

that they should finish off the school year with a trip to his home. He lived in a small town in the north-eastern tip of Bohemia, Ústí nad Orlicí, and the two boys travelled the whole night on a slow mixed train hidden in one of the vans.

> First thing after our arrival we went to look at the church. The inside of it was a marvel: the entire ceiling covered with frescoes illustrating the birth of Christ with angels' wings framing the narrative. Julek could not tear me away from the contemplation of such a miracle. Who painted it? I asked him. 'Umlauf,' Julek replied briefly. But when he saw how the pictures held me he added: 'He is our local painter. He even worked in Prague. There's a set of his paintings of the prodigal son in the Jesuit church.' From these remarks, the personality of Umlauf began to grow in my mind, until it unconsciously merged in my imagination with the winged cherubs and the herd of grazing pigs dreaming of full troughs. I never forgot this deep impression for the rest of my life and, whenever I had time, I would go to St Ignatius's Church in Prague and pay homage to my teacher.

Father's stay at Ústí was to become a landmark in his life. Julek let on to his friends that he had a flair for drawing. First clients arrived and then every evening Father would sit in the pub 'U Cimrpichů' drawing the local inhabitants one after the other. Gradually he realized that painting could be a profession, especially after this encounter with Umlauf (1825–1916), the last representative of the Czech baroque tradition. Previously all the paintings he had come across in the Brno churches had been by artists long since dead. A painter was somebody of the past, with no relation to contemporary life. Suddenly he discovered that pictures which he admired had been painted by an old man whom Julek pointed out to him in the street. Why should he too not grow up to be like Umlauf? Before the end of his stay at Ústí nad Orlicí he had firmly decided to become a painter.

3

GRANDFATHER ANDREAS received Father with the news that he had found him employment. Thanks to his personal influence at the court he managed to get him in as a clerk. Father was shattered. Any form of office work was utterly alien to his character. Basically he was an orderly person and could never tolerate a Bohemian mess around him; he carefully washed his palette and brushes every evening and kept his paints tidily arranged in their box. But apart from that he was unfit for any sort of civil service. He believed everybody, wanted to please everybody, forgot everything and never remembered faces. He also had an original method of dealing with correspondence: he kept his letters in two piles—one opened and read, the other not yet opened or read. Every now and again he would put these piles in a place where they would least get in the way—usually on top of a wardrobe. As he was not very tall the letters would disappear out of sight and there they remained, a year, two years, some even ten years, unopened, unanswered, forgotten.

These were not qualities likely to make a good official. But there was no other opening, and my father became a clerk, devoting his spare time to any activity that was in some way connected with drawing. Ivančice had a number of patriotic societies and there was always work for someone who could decorate a hall, make a poster or design invitations. There was also an amateur theatrical group

where a good draughtsman was constantly in demand. He became so engrossed that he was soon expert in handling meetings and club matters and remained faithful to this time-wasting activity his whole life. Everywhere he went he founded societies and kept being elected chairman of the most unlikely and useless organizations. He believed the individual can best serve humanity by spreading culture and noble ideas; he was convinced that people were hungry for beauty and would gladly and gratefully receive it. Perhaps he saw the world as a kind of glorified Ivančice whose population welcomed every deed that strengthened them in their national struggle. After all, he was not much different from his contemporaries in other countries. The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of messianism. Hundreds of individuals campaigned for hundreds of causes. Anarchists threw bombs, patriots arranged processions, socialists organized strikes, artists campaigned for a new art, philosophers for a new morality, technicians for a new world. The collapse of absolutism and the disintegration of an outmoded society gave everybody the opportunity of coming forward with a new idea and hoping it might prevail. Many in fact did prevail. The world was willing to listen to apostles.

Father was mainly drawn to the theatre. Not only did he paint décors, he was also an amateur actor-producer. This was a good preparation for his later work at the Théâtre de la Renaissance—without it he might have felt rather helpless at the beginning. By now he had also realized that his self-taught technique was not enough and he devoted some of his time to a systematic training in drawing. His teacher was a certain Professor Zelený who had spotted his talent while he was still at school in Brno and who remained his adviser after he returned to Ivančice. In the

end Zelený interceded with grandfather Andreas, explaining to him that his son was a gifted painter. He obtained grandfather's consent to let him try for the Academy in Prague. The old man was in fact quite resigned in the matter. Since his hopes that his son might become a priest had come to nothing, he just shrugged his shoulders and commended his affairs to fate.

On Professor Zelený's advice Father got together his drawings, sent them to the Academy in Prague and after allowing some time to elapse, went personally for an answer.

> I arrived at about eleven o'clock in the morning after a sleepless night. I walked from the station along a street leading to the Prague Tower where I entered the Old Town and lost my way. I wandered through a mesh of narrow streets until I found myself standing in front of the huge black Tyn Church. Sleepy and hungry I went in and decided to rest for a while. In the darkest corner was a short pew overhung with drapings and banners. I put my hat on the pew, my stick next to it—that was all I had—and fell asleep. I don't know what happened to me until I felt somebody's elbow in my ribs. I woke up and saw that I was on the Charles bridge. People were walking past me and bumping into me. All I could remember was that I had fallen asleep somewhere. I had no stick or hat. So I turned round and went back across the bridge, along Charles Street and over the Old Town Square until I found the church and the corner with its banners and drapings, my hat and stick were where I had left them.

The Tyn Church is gloomy and mysterious and since few people find their way to its entrance, hidden behind a row of old houses, it is mostly empty. Nothing can be seen of it except the two black towers rising over the roofs of the Old Town like a rugged fork. In the wall of the church above the short pew is a window which leads into a room. The occupant of this room can at any time open the

window and look into the desolate nave of the church with the perpetual light flickering over the black altar. Franz Kafka was to live there forty years later.

The first thing I did was to go and see Vollberger, the organist, at Strahov Monastery. I rang the bell and a maid opened the door. 'Is Mr Vollberger in?'—'Yes, but he's playing.' He was playing, but at skittles. She showed me through to the garden where some fifteen priests were sitting under the trees, drinking beer and playing skittles. He was pleased to see me and, handing me a glass, asked me what I was doing. I told him why I had come. 'Where did you sleep?' he asked 'In a church.' He tilted his head to one side. 'You can stay here if you like.' Things were getting off to a good start. I went to the station where I had left my suitcase with my two shirts, a scarf and two pairs of socks. I moved into the house, slept the night and proceeded to act as his guest the following day. That was a Sunday and I could not go to the Academy until the Monday. So I spent a second night there. In the morning Mrs Vollberger came to tell me that her husband had had to go away. I replied that this did not matter, but she evidently wanted me to go too. Finally I understood. Once again I carried my suitcase to the station, but this time I took out the two pairs of socks and sold them in the ghetto. I got sixpence, enough for a night's rest, but first I went to the Academy. There I was welcomed by Professor Lhota somewhat coolly. 'Young man,' he said, 'there are many painters but little money. I'd advise you to find yourself another profession where you can get on better.' The whole interview lasted less than five minutes. I did not dare to go home and wandered around Prague with the six pennies for my socks until I came to the Golden Goose in Wenceslas Square which had a large taproom with benches and long tables. It was getting dark. I sat down in a corner and tried somehow to live through my disappointment and the long night. Suddenly I saw two lads grab hold of a table and carry it outside. Then they took another, and again another, until they had cleared the whole place. Then they brought in straw and spread in on the floor, the ears to the centre, the straw to the walls. This was our dormitory. People at my

Mucha in bed at the rue du Val de Grâce

At work, rue de la Grande Chaumière

Mucha with Anna La Javannaise, c. 1893

Gauguin at the harmonium in Mucha's studio, 1893

table were still eating the food they had ordered, but I had not ordered anything because I lacked the necessary cash. A labourer sitting next to me ordered some goulash. I merely glanced at it out of the corner of my eye, but he noticed all the same. He was a nice fellow. He ate a bit more and gave me the rest. I thanked him, ate it up and went to lie down. There were at least twenty of us lying there when a policeman came in and asked to see our papers. Naturally I had none, but when I explained to him at length why I had come he left me in peace. We fell asleep again and suddenly there was uproar and shouting in the yard. We got up and rushed out. On the highest balcony was a man with one leg over the railing, about to jump down. As I was not able to help, I just stood and watched to see if he would fall. Then somebody came out of the door, dragged him in and we went back to our straw. In the morning I still had a little money so I bought a roll, and to make breakfast more substantial I went to drink some water from the fountain. Then I wandered around Prague for a long time and thought about what I would tell my family. I wanted to see Vollberger and ask his advice but when I got to the Strahov Monastery I remembered how I was pushed out and lost courage. I walked on past the town gate; the road led into the open country, only on the right there were still a few houses. In one of them people danced, so I went in and watched. It was getting dark and when I wanted to go back to town I found the gate shut. I did not know there was a small gate open for pedestrians. I walked away. People were sitting in front of their houses, talking and smoking, and one man seemed especially affable. I went up to him and said: 'Please, could I sleep at your house? The town is shut and I have nowhere to go.' He nodded: 'Go round to the back.' He was a potter and his kiln was alight in his workshop. Somebody came and put two boards on the floor, covering them with a blanket and told me to lie down. It was hot, the kiln crackled, its light flickering over the ceiling. I lay and pondered. Here I was, but what should I do in the morning? What should I do in the future? I was afraid. Then I fell asleep for a bit and when I awoke it was dawn. I took my coat and slipped off into the garden, through a fence and then another fence until I got to the gate. They were just opening it

and the first carters were going into the town. I told myself that somehow or other things would work out all right and that I was going home.

What happened when he appeared before grandfather Andreas nobody knows. He returned to the court and continued making his entries in the big book, while the magistrate judged vagrants, poachers and petty criminals whom grandfather took off to the jail. To help pass the time Father adorned the pages with artfully illuminated initials. Although this was not exactly according to the rules, his superiors turned a blind eye. Nevertheless one day his career at the court abruptly ended. A gipsy family was brought in and Father's task was to enter up their personal particulars. Instead of this he drew a portrait of each member of the family, and the next day he was not required at the office.

Chance always played an important part in his life. It interfered so strikingly in his destiny that in the course of time he began to believe in a higher power leading him to some distant, significant goal. In this his idea accorded with the opinions of many artists of the time who were to become his close friends. Art was a mission which the artist carried out as the servant of a higher principle, whether the principle were God, Beauty, Wisdom or whatever. In such a climate he could hardly fail to believe that the continuous series of chance events, following one after another as in an early nineteenth-century novel, should have a deeper significance, the purpose of which he would come to understand at the right time.

The situation at Ivančice was becoming extremely difficult. He tried to put his talents to good use; here and there he earned a few pennies by decorating halls for dance evenings, but his ability to cut out paper decora-

tions simultaneously with his right and left hand won him more admiration than his skill as an artist. One day he read an advertisement in a Viennese newspaper: Messrs Kautsky-Brioschi-Burghardt, makers of theatrical scenery and curtains, were looking for a young painter for their workshop. He sent off several drawings to Vienna along with his application for the job. A reply came by return of post. He packed his trunk, took leave of his family and left for Vienna in the autumn of 1879.

The capital city of the Monarchy was passing through the period of its greatest splendour. The Battle of Königgrätz and the defeat by Prussia were soon forgotten and Vienna, until recently a small town hemmed in by ramparts, spilled over into the surrounding vineyards. The Ringstrasse had replaced the demolished fortifications, and within a few years fantastic palaces were constructed in all manner of styles, embellished with balconies, oriel windows, domes, columns and statues of goddesses, mythological heroes and half-naked warriors. Architects and artists vied with each other in creating magnificent interiors. Gold and onyx, marble and stucco, frescoes, antique busts and entire arsenals of old weapons created an environment for the new élite that had amassed its wealth on the Stock Exchange and bought itself aristocratic titles sold by the Imperial Office as a means of covering the rising expenses of the ruling household. The hearts of the Viennese swelled with gratified pride. Never had life been so easy, so merry and carefree, never had the splendour of the court fallen so profligately on all the Emperor's subjects. This was no economic miracle. Wealth flowed into Vienna from all the provinces of the Empire

and there it stayed. It was a short-sighted policy which ultimately was bound to undermine the very existence of Austria-Hungary, but who bothered about tomorrow? Like the Emperor Francis Joseph himself, the least burdensome autocrat in history, Vienna could do no more than preserve the status quo and shrug its shoulders regretfully over the possibility of impending ruin. The Emperor's resigned statement: 'If the Monarchy has to end, let it at least do so decently', could have served as a motto for the entire capital city.

Vienna and Francis Joseph thoroughly understood one another, and the last Emperor will always remain the nostalgic symbol of the town's youth. By coming to the throne during the revolution of 1848, he saved it from the need to continue in its half-hearted radicalism. He made Vienna into a capital. He was a reliable bureaucrat with absolute power which he never exercised, except in his own family or in matters that did not concern the man in the street. He did not interfere, at least not publicly, where he did not understand, and in his punctiliousness he did not even allow his personal antipathies to affect the destinies of his subjects. Some officials he could not bear; nevertheless he would sign their promotions and decorations with a sigh of resignation. He was so conservative and so disdainful of everything new that he would never use a telephone, a lift or a car, and for a long time he refused to read documents written on a typewriter. He was so convinced of the supreme Imperial prerogatives that he found distasteful Kaiser Wilhelm's sentence: 'Supreme lex regis voluntas' which he had written into the Munich City Charter, since 'Such a sentence being so clearly self-evident, does not come fittingly from an emperor's pen.' He lived an ascetic life, his memory was prodigious, he had no under-

standing of art, and he controlled his feelings to the point of inhumanity. The executions, murders and suicides of the members of his family merely caused him to withdraw still more into himself and his office work. His love-life ended tragically. He was to have married the elder daughter of the popular Max of Bavaria who used to go around Munich in leather shorts and bare knees and climbed the Cheops pyramid with the object of playing his zither on the top. A meeting with the future bride was arranged at Bad Ischl, but Francis Joseph happened to catch sight of her sixteen-year-old sister, Elizabeth. He immediately fell in love with her and made her his Empress. Shortly after the wedding, however, everything to do with the court and the Emperor began to fill Elizabeth with disgust. She spent all her time abroad, flinging away fantastic sums of money, until she was stabbed to death with a file by the anarchist Luccheni at Geneva in 1897.

For Vienna, which saw only his benignant mask, his grey whiskers and the coach drawn by eight white horses, the Emperor was the sure guarantee of its future. This was all that was required of him, for glamour was in the hands of the archdukes and Johann Strauss. The famous balls, where dashing officers in colourful uniforms dazzled the eye and the pastel shades of the ladies' dresses swirled in the dance, invariably opened with a new surprise for which the whole city waited with bated breath, a Strauss waltz specially composed for the occasion. Nowhere in the whole of Europe was there a more glorious event than the annual court ball and no city, not even Paris, revelled with such élan and such conviviality, down to the humblest charwoman, in its enjoyment of the court festivities. It was not only wealth that flowed into the capital city from Bohemia, Poland, Hungary, Croatia and northern

Italy; hundreds of young lieutenants on leave came to squander part of their family fortune in gallant adventures, or to hunt a rich bride to the strains of a waltz, before returning to the desolate boredom of the Hungarian *puszta* or eastern Galicia. Every morning there was the ritual of the promenade when young ladies in the company of their mothers would drive up in carriages and alight in front of the Sacher Hotel to spend an hour strolling along the Ringstrasse, gathering in the courteous bows and ardent glances of the promenading men. The famous Girardi in his straw hat, to which he gave his name long before Chevalier, went from one triumph to another on the stage of the Vaudeville, while the two leading ladies of the operetta, Geistinger and Pepi Gallmeyer, drew crowds to the 'An der Wien' theatre. All Vienna sang, in the garden restaurants, pubs, courtyards of the tenement houses and at the Prater where the Viennese spent their Sundays drinking wine, while the aristocracy made exuberant carriage rides along the wide roads, providing the people with a spectacle of splendid white horses and the ballet-like perfection of their trot. It was only for her artists of genius that Vienna did not always show true understanding. The architects Van der Nüll and Siccardsburg conceived the most magnificent opera house of the age, one that remained for a long time the musical hub of Europe; but just as Vienna had allowed Mozart to die in penury, so now it pounced on the architects before the building had been completed. When even the Emperor expressed his opinion that the opera house, built partly in the old city moat, really sat too low in the ground, Van der Nüll hanged himself and some weeks later, Siccardsburg, overcome with grief, died of a stroke. The Emperor learned his lesson; from that time he never expressed criticism of

any work of art and limited himself to the stereotype, 'Es war sehr schön, es hat mich sehr gefreut' (It was very nice, I much enjoyed it).

It was to this dancing Vienna, careless about the future, that my father came at the age of nineteen. He had finally found employment that suited him and along with it an entire capital city wide open to his curiosity, with its churches, art galleries and theatres. Being employed by a theatrical firm, he received free tickets for all performances and was advised to follow evening classes where he might acquire the first real foundations of painting. He was slim, with light curly hair, flashing eyes, an aristocratic face and an attractive voice; he played the violin and the guitar. Vienna was all set to devour him, as she did thousands of young people whom she soaked up from the provinces of the Monarchy.

Like Strauss in music, Hans Makart (1840–84) was the dominant figure of the day in painting. His fame was absolute. Makart placed the city's crown on her head and dressed her up in the fantasy of his brocades. Whereas other artists embellished her palaces with mythological scenes, with godlike women performing symbolic acts in impersonal scenery, Makart painted real Viennese women in his allegories and historical scenes, just as he saw them in the streets, just as they came to look over his famous studio. In an age when convention did not even permit women to uncover their shoulders and kept a strict watch over their morals, ladies of noble blood willingly allowed themselves to be portrayed in the nude by Makart as Aphrodite or the Muses. Society, instead of recoiling in horror, applauded with enthusiasm. Makart had unconsciously grasped what Vienna still required for her happiness—the canonization of her own women's beauty. In

the end, even canvas was not enough. His greatest triumph was the huge pageant devised, created and fitted out by himself on the occasion of the Emperor's jubilee in which his *tableaux vivants* moved through Vienna on immense carriages accompanied by a procession of symbolic figures in extravagant costumes.

With such a powerful lure Vienna could not fail to influence the young man from the country. Had not Makart reached the highest goal to which a painter could aspire? There were even analogies in character. Makart had a fondness for big canvases and minute research. When tailors showed themselves incapable of producing the costumes he designed, he would himself cut the cloth and then direct them to 'sew it together'. He had a pleiad of women admirers and these in turn gave rise to a fantastic reputation, whereas in fact he was meticulous and reserved. In his studio he had a deep shaft into which he lowered his large canvases instead of working on them from a step-ladder. After his death hundreds of love letters from unknown women were found in this shaft—unopened. During his short life he influenced everything: fashion, painting and interior decoration. He borrowed from all ages and all styles. He was a magician who was able to do anything—except create something new. Like the bouquet of dried grass and plants that incorrectly bears his name, Makart created Viennese atmosphere out of the dried elements of Renaissance, Gothic and baroque.

For a while my father did succumb to Makart's influence. He was well aware that there were better painters in Vienna but Makart's personality and his studio with its exotic decoration and draperies, where the most celebrated musicians gave private concerts, impressed him deeply. The female figures which he sketched at the time

in charcoal on large sheets of paper bore a striking resemblance to Makart's sensual Viennese Ariadnes, Madonnas and Psyches.

Who knows how his life might have turned out if chance had not intervened again? On 10 December 1881, one of the largest Viennese theatres, the Ringtheater, went up in flames and five hundred people perished in the auditorium. The catastrophe had a typically Viennese touch. The police and the firemen were in no hurry to take action because somebody had assured them that all the public had gone and the police duty officer, who should have directed rescue operations, was having dinner. His maid who had heard about the fire from the greengrocer failed to inform him. As a result of the catastrophe the firm of Kautsky-Brioschi-Burghardt lost its best customer and had to dismiss some of its staff. Father, being the youngest, received his notice.

I was in a very interesting frame of mind. It was neither dismay nor fear, but rather curiosity. What would come of all this? I had a feeling that it would turn out all right and that somehow or other I should continue painting. So long as I had some money, I remained in Vienna, but when I had only five florins left I set off into the blue. Some instinct drew me towards the Francis Joseph station. There I looked at the timetable for trains going north, and my attention was caught by the name Laa. Right, then, let's go and take a look at Laa.

I arrived there towards evening, got out of the train and waited to see what would happen. Nothing happened, absolutely nothing. Nobody came to help me, nobody wanted anything from me. I looked around. There was an old ruin on a hill. Right. I got out my sketch book and began to draw it. But once again nothing happened. Never mind! So long as I had some money, I could always go down the line. The next station was Mikulov. I bought myself a ticket, got into the next train and after a short while got out at Mikulov. Now I really had no more money to

travel further. I went into the town, past the castle and, on the corner of the square, read the words Lion Hotel. I asked if they had a room. 'Will you have dinner?' All right, I'd have dinner. This could turn out awkward without any money. In the morning I got my drawing of the ruin at Laa out of my suitcase and went to a bookseller whose name was Thiery. I asked him if he would exhibit it for me. He looked at it and said he would passepartout it and would give me five florins. This was a lot of money for me. I told myself: This is it. I had enough money r breakfast, dinner and a bed, but that was all. So I got busy drawing again, not ruins this time, but the people around me as I had done at Ústí. I painted the head of a pretty woman and brought it to Thiery. He put it into the window and I began to look forward to the cash. When there was no news from Thiery for two and even three days, I went to ask him myself. The good man wasn't at all pleased to see me. Mikulov society was filled with indignation, and my picture had had to be taken out of the window. The young lady I had painted was the wife of the local doctor, and Thiery had put a notice next to the portrait saying: 'For five florins at the Lion Hotel'.

The scandal was duly explained and in the end worked out to my advantage. The whole town knew that a painter had come to live at the Lion. In the course of time I painted the whole neighbourhood—all the uncles and aunts of Mikulov. Next I decorated the theatre, painted the curtain and acted; I even had to play the violin or a guitar at musical evenings. When the ball season started, I was invited to every dance and soon I had become one of Mikulov's adoptive inhabitants.

Once he nearly wrecked his social career. He jumped down from a step-ladder when working on the theatre curtain and tore his already shabby trousers. In those days the fashion was a three-quarter-length coat, and for some time he could hope that the rent would not be noticed. Finally, however, he began avoiding society, turning down invitations and pretending to have a cold. One day a tailor appeared and politely told him he had come to measure

him for a pair of trousers. Father never bothered greatly how much anything cost. If the trousers were to be made to measure, very well then, let them! Two days later the tailor returned with the new trousers and, when asked how much they would cost, replied with a smile that the bill was of no importance. Quite unperturbed my father donned the new trousers and the social season was saved. It was only many years later in Paris that he learned the truth. The trousers had been ordered and paid for by the ladies of Mikulov.

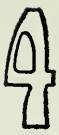
His activity, however, was not limited to dances and painting portraits of the local beauties. A letter in German from the firm of Hugo Gallus, Mikulov, Moravia, throws a more sinister light on this period:

> We enclose two more tombstone inscriptions and would ask you to have No. 1 ready at the latest by tomorrow, that is, Wednesday morning. It is to be placed on a light marble slab, and we would ask you if possible to select words that will cover the whole slab. Not much ornamentation, please, because there is very little time to carry out the job.

With so many commissions, his circumstances improved to such an extent that he was able to move to a better hotel, the Badel. Here, one day, he had a visit from Mr Berger, the manager of a large estate belonging to Count Khuen, a big landowner who also built several sugar refineries around the nearby village of Hrušovany. In his spare time Mr Berger did wood carving and he asked my father to draw him an ornamental design for a large tabletop.

> I made him a design and Mr Berger was very pleased with it [Father relates]. After this we became good friends and, as he was a bee-keeper, he taught me how to select hives, how to settle in a queen bee and how to catch a migrating swarm. When

the original owner of the estate, Count Khuen's father-in-law, had his sixtieth birthday I had to make a congratulatory address for the staff to present to him. They gave me three days to look around the estate and select my themes. So Count Khuen happened to hear about me, and once again my life underwent a sudden change.



THE premonition that induced Father to leave Vienna and try his luck at Mikulov was sound. Count Khuen, who had built a new castle in the forest near Hrušovany, asked the young artist settled at Mikulov to cover his dining-room walls with frescoes. Not having done any work of this kind before, Father pumped a local decorator and got down to work. He was convinced that destiny, having provided for him in this way, would also give him the necessary inspiration as to how to proceed. He moved from Mikulov to the castle where he was now able to study books on art and science from the count's library and, for the first time in many years, eat and sleep to capacity. Life at the castle gave him a taste for sumptuous living. Until now, his experience of grandiose interiors had been confined to churches, but Emmahof was the private residence of one person with everything that, as a boy, he had been fascinated by in church. The reception rooms were in a pseudo-rococo style, glittering with chandeliers and wall-length mirrors. The library was panelled in dark oak and all four walls were filled with rows of books in ancient gilt bindings. In front of the enormous fireplace was a deep, soft sofa and dark leather armchairs. In the subdued light from table-lamp and fireplace, hunting dogs occupied stately positions on bearskin rugs and a white angora cat stalked ghost-like among the dull polished wood of heavy furniture. Servants in blue, gold-buttoned livery moved

silently along corridors hung with trophies and ancient weapons. All this now became the home of a lad whose university had been the Street of the Virgins in Brno and the district court jail. The portals of Emmahof led to an entirely new world.

Once he had finished Count Khuen's murals Father thought he might return to Vienna and complete his training as a painter. Messrs Kautsky-Brioschi-Burkhardt had overcome their financial difficulties and were prepared to re-employ him. But Count Khuen was aware that he had unearthed a young talent and did not intend to lose him. The tradition of aristocratic patrons of art was still alive in the old Austrian Monarchy. Prince John II of Liechtenstein, who owned family collections going back three centuries, supported a number of artists and was continually giving works of art to various museums. When advised to go more cautiously and put a brake on his generosity he replied: 'When I can no longer give away what I please, I shall cease to be a prince.' Count Hans Wilczek had converted his castle at Kreuzenstein into a fantastic art collection and in 1872 fitted out a complete Polar expedition which, under the leadership of a painter named Payer, sailed to the Arctic Ocean. There, unfortunately, it became icebound; the crew had to abandon ship and returned only after two years of terrible hardship to Vienna. Payer, who had hoped that the Emperor would at least raise him to the rank of colonel for the discovery of Francis Joseph Land, received twenty-four florins and was cashiered. He went to Paris, painted Polar landscapes and died in total obscurity. Another favourite of Count Wilczek was a Czech painter, Jan Straširybka, who used the pseudonym Hans Canon and went around in high boots and Turkish trousers, with a silk sash round his waist. In

1848 he fought so passionately on the barricades that he was sentenced to be shot and was saved only by his uncle, General Hauslab, who quickly got him a commission with a cuirassiers' regiment stationed in Hungary. He did not, however, stay in the *puszta* for long. He was cashiered when he sprang from his seat at a circus on to a galloping horse to show the performers how to ride. Back at Vienna he became famous with his pictures and love affairs, until Count Wilczek took him on a lion-hunting expedition to Africa where he expired after leaping from a tree.

Prompted by such examples of patronage, Count Khuen was naturally keen to see the young artist he had discovered remain in his orbit. He dissuaded him from going to Vienna and sent him instead to his brother, Count Egon, who lived in their native castle Gandegg in the Tyrol. This was to be the happiest time of Father's early youth. He fell in love with the medieval castle perched among the rocks on the slopes of the Dolomites, with its Gothic vaulting, baronial hall and armoury, its four towers giving a view over the forest landscape, the vineyards in the valley and the pink glow of the cliffs of the Rose Garden in the blue dusk. Count Egon, an amateur painter, provided paints, easels and canvases, and the two would spend hours painting together or, when Count Egon insisted for long enough, hunting in the surrounding mountains. For Father, who hated walking and who was a poor shot, this was an ordeal. Once in despair he threw his gun after a hare. On another occasion he caught sight of a large eagle devouring its prey behind a projecting crag. For a moment he watched fascinated, then he screwed up his courage and prepared to fire. But before he could take aim the gun went off and the bullet hit the ground near his foot. 'And I was glad that it all finished well for

both the eagle and me,' he commented on his achievement.

During his stay at Gandegg he was evidently still in touch with his family. His sister Anna wrote in a letter dated 'Ivančice, at the jail, 16.2.1884.'

Dear Brother,

The other day we slaughtered a pig. I am sending you some sausages and some crackling. We would also send you some brawn but we don't know if you'd eat it, so write and tell us. Don't eat the crackling all at once, it's very rich. You can fry the sausages on one side if they're not quite done. We are also not sure if we have your correct address, so that if you don't get this letter, write immediately and let me know. Your sister, faithful to the grave, Anna.

In another letter, dated 6 April 1885, Anna assures him: 'Once we have some eggs, we shall certainly find you a hedgehog.' Father had a somewhat curious fondness for animals. He never had a dog or a cat, but in Paris he kept a common grey mouse and in Vienna a tame spider which he fed with flies. 'The question is, however, how are we going to send the hedgehog to the Tyrol so that he doesn't die on the way? What do you think? In a cage? What food should we give him?'

That year Gordon met his death at Khartoum; the Exhibition of New Inventions opened in London and was to exert a vast influence on the future development of Europe. Correspondence between Gandegg and Ivančice, however, dealt with problems involved in the despatch of a hedgehog. But, as always when my father seemed to have found an agreeable and permanent way of life, chance intervened to shift him, as he believed, on to the right road.

One day Count Egon and I were walking across the little square of the Eppan village when a man sitting in front of the

restaurant called out to him. It was his old acquaintance from Munich, Pott, a professor of Agronomy. They shook hands and the Count invited him up to the castle. Pott accepted with pleasure and said he would bring a friend, Kray, who had just been appointed professor at the Academy. Kray was a typical Munich painter. He did nothing but nymphs and Loreleis. As the Count was showing them round the castle, they came to look at my room which was full of paintings. Kray glanced round at them and shook his head. 'What are you doing here?' he asked me. 'Painting,' I said. Kray then turned to the Count: 'This is not right for the young man. There's no point in his painting from nature. He ought to go to the Academy at Munich.' 'Good,' said the Count. 'After the vacation you will go to Munich.'

Now my life was in a new channel. I felt as though I was going through a strange door into an unknown passage, endlessly long. I said goodnight to Count Egon and returned thoughtfully to my room. There I sat down and looked at each of my pictures in turn. They all seemed small and full of mistakes. Despite the growing darkness I set up a fresh canvas and began to work. I wanted to paint something I would be really satisfied with. I worked a long time. But I have never yet succeeded in painting this picture . . .

In the autumn of 1885, my father sat for the examination in figurative painting and was found mature enough to skip the first two years. His professors were Löfftz and Herterich, neither of whom were outstanding painters but, as so often happens, excellent teachers. At that time Munich was an artistic centre whose significance spread far beyond central Europe. The Wittelsbach family was systematically filling the city with buildings in the pseudo-antique style and piling up artistic treasures in copies of Greek temples. Academicism was all the rage. When Spitzweg (1808–85) and Piloti (1826–86) died their funerals were conducted on a royal scale. The students at the Academy vied with each other in the size and theatricality of their historical compositions and freely mixed in

'museum sauce' with their paints to make them as close as possible to the tones of the old masters. Artistically, Munich was at boiling point, but it faced backwards. Everything was impregnated with the past, with classicism and the copying of old models. King Ludwig II spent enormous sums on the artistic embellishment of his extraordinary castles, but these millions were converted into monstrous hypertrophied rococo or stage décor Gothic.

When Ludwig came to the throne in 1864, as a nineteen-year-old youth, the country welcomed him with enthusiasm. He was tall, slim and handsome, with long flowing locks and a dreamy look in his deep romantic eyes. He worshipped Louis XIV, Marie Antoinette and Wagner. Brought up in seclusion in the family mansion at Hohenschwangau, surrounded by mountains, lakes and black forests, he had been fascinated by visions of resuscitated sovereign majesty blazing like the sun over the entire kingdom. When, unexpectedly, he became king, he was still in thrall to these notions, but now he had the power to put them into effect. It was Richard Wagner who presented him with his first opportunity. The artist whose work exercised a demonic influence on the mind of the young ruler was at that time in desperate financial difficulties. Ludwig rapturously summoned him to Munich, afforded him unlimited financial assistance, protected and worshipped him, and enabled him to realize the cherished ideal of his life, Bayreuth. Wagner's operas became a vital necessity to the King, providing him with intoxicating material for his greatest and most magnificent dreams. In the course of time these dreams became the one real world in which he lived and which he left only with the greatest reluctance to return to the plebeian reality of his duties. He

withdrew into a society that was composed of beings equal to himself—le Roi Soleil, Louis XV, Madame de Maintenon; he arranged ceremonial dinners for them, chatting to them as he sat alone at his long table and raising his champagne glass in their honour. His ancestral home and his residence at Munich were no longer sufficient. He started building monstrous mansions and castles in the forests—four sanctuaries for his lonely contemplation of genius, four stages for his dreams, the Wagner tetralogy in stone and gold. The year 1885 saw the completion of Lindrehof, an outsize paraphrase of the Trianon whose gold, brocades, mirrors, carvings and stucco exceeded anything that the most deranged rococo fantasy was capable of inventing. The lapis lazuli for the fireplace came from the Urals; the cheapest material for the furniture was rosewood; the carpets were made of ostrich feathers. In the underwater coral-sea kingdom of his enormous bedroom the King would stretch his limbs beneath the fluttering canopy of a grotesque bed, dominating the room like the throne in an imaginary court. In the park, where servants had to clear the snow to the last flake whenever the King desired to forget the depressing season of winter, was a blue cave with artificial stalactites. Here, in the subdued glow of coloured lights, Lohengrin's barge would be gently rocked on the waters to enable the King to give himself up to his dreams, feed the swans and sing, while in the background a mysterious light illuminated a painting of Tannhäuser in the Venusberg.

Further off, at the ready in case of a change of mood, stood a Moorish pavilion with bronze peacocks inlaid with pearls and precious stones, fountains and swaying incense censers, where Ludwig could play at being Harun al-Rashid, while hidden still deeper in the woods was an

ancient German log cabin with open fireplace, horns and pelts—Hunding's hut from *The Valkyrie*. Here he would spend nights as Siegfried in the company of his lackeys in rough Teutonic amusements.

Meanwhile a second construction, more bizarre still, had been completed: Neuschwanstein, a gigantic castle perched on the uppermost crags of a mountain. Here, too, an enormous bedroom held sway, this time in Gothic style, dedicated to the memory of Tristan and Isolde, with a stalactitic cave, artificial lake and waterfall, and an artificial moon going through its phases above. In the depths of the cave was a small greenhouse, lodged like a swallow's nest over an abyss of walls and rock, with blooming jasmine and oranges and birds of paradise hopping from branch to branch in a tropical climate.

On an island in the middle of a Bavarian lake, looking like a *fata Morgana*, was Herrenchiemsee, a fantasy in gold, glass, marble and alabaster, copied from Versailles. Here Ludwig would spend ten days every year in solitary state, giving dinners in the enormous rooms, lit by a thousand candles, for the ghosts of French kings, and holding ceremonial levees from a bed whose gold trappings had been woven over a period of seven years by twenty embroiderers.

Falkenstein, the last of the castles, remained only on paper. The government refused to grant the King any more money. Ludwig's rage against those who were preventing him from realizing the essential aim of his life reached new heights. Giving his ministers the slip, he obliged them to go searching for him in the forest in their black clothes and top hats. When they finally caught up with him and delivered their reports among the rocks or in a clearing, Ludwig interrupted them with long passages

from Schiller's dramas. To avoid people he would sleep during the day, rising at night to drive off into the darkness, the wind and the rain, in a golden coach or on golden rococo sledges drawn by eight horses, plunging across hill and valley like a phantom unable to find rest. He put on weight until he became an ungainly giant. He would fly into a rage over the least offence against his majesty, throttle his servants, order their ears to be cut off, demand that a footman who had seen him striding through the library whinnying like a horse should be whipped to death, that the Minister of Finance who refused him twenty million to complete Neuschwanstein should have both his eyes put out. His servants were ordered to scratch at the doors instead of knocking, to resemble the dogs they really were. They had to cringe when they approached the King and since, as time went by, he even grudged having to use his voice on them, they received their orders on pieces of paper which he first spat on and then pushed under the door. He would only address his ministers through the door; alternatively he would dictate his replies to a lackey who passed them on to the government, complete with spelling mistakes. His contacts with people came to be limited to a few trusted lackeys and grooms who dined with him at the ceremonial table, dressed up as French noblemen at court or as potentates from the *Thousand and One Nights*. Once he invited a horse to the table and when the animal stamped on some valuable porcelain, Ludwig quoted it with grim pleasure as an example of the animal nature of people blind to the higher glory of his majesty.

The mad King and the exploits of his morbid fantasy did not, however, bring about any oppressive atmosphere in Munich. In fact the effect was the exact opposite. The

Bavarian people never ceased to love their handsome prince lost in his dreams; while his golden coach careering through sleeping villages at night satisfied their need for romance and legends, the exploits with which he brought his government to despair did not concern them. Nobody took his bloody sentences seriously, and the fact that he scrupulously avoided the public eye enabled the government to attend to affairs of State in its own way without interference. Wrapped in the legend of its crazy ruler, Munich was a gay and carefree German Montparnasse to which students came from all over the world; life there was easy and although the competition was severe, it was not aggressive. Paris did not bother Munich. The battles fought by the Impressionists were merely a distant rumble. Munich was the artistic heart of Germany and that was enough.

Father found rooms in the Amalienstrasse not far from the Academy, next to the 'Zum Grünen Esch', an inn with an artistic atmosphere frequented by art students who ate beef à la mode and dumplings, washing it down with heavy black beer. He made friends with the Russian painters, Pasternak—the father of the poet—and Widhopf, whose real name was Davidof, and the Moravian painter Úprka. They used to gather at Father's room every day, in a sort of private clan and they corrected each other's compositions.

As we worked Úprka would sing Moravian folksongs, Widhopf Russian, and I would sing whatever came into my head, accompanying myself on the guitar. We published our drawings in our journal, *The Palette*, and other Munich newspapers which brought us some kind of regular income. Once, the Poles held a big party at the Bamberger Hof Hotel to which I was invited.

The Poles, of course, were all in black evening dress, whereas I had nothing black at all. Eventually I just managed to borrow the necessary garments—a jacket from Marold, trousers from another friend, but nobody had the prescribed white gloves. It occurred to us that the waitress at the Bamberger Hof Hotel might help. Indeed, after some searching, two servant girls ran up from the kitchen, triumphantly waving a pair of gloves as white as snow, belonging to the cook. The only trouble was that they reached almost to my armpits. I had to undress completely in order to get them under my shirt. All went well. There were speeches and toasts. But when we arrived at the buffet, I discovered to my horror that at least one glove would have to be taken off. I sat down at a table and slowly, with a tremendous effort, tried to pull the endless glove from my sleeve. In vain. In the end, with half a yard of glove hanging from my cuff, I gave up the idea of eating and spent the rest of the evening with one hand nonchalantly in my pocket.

As my father completed his first year at Munich, the final act in the tragedy of King Ludwig took place. By June 1885, the government was no longer willing to endure a ruler on the throne who was clearly insane and insisted on his being deposed. The problem was how to remove him from power legally and prevent him from using the loyalty of his servants and his popularity with the people to resist. Finally a psychiatrical commission led by Professor von Gudden was sent to Neuschwanstein, the eagle's nest in the mountains where the suspicious Ludwig had taken refuge. The commission was to overpower him and certify him insane. However, when the doctors and the people from the lunatic asylum reached the gate, the King's servants refused to admit them and Ludwig had them thrown into prison. He made frantic efforts to defend himself, drawing up proclamations, sacking the government, sending telegrams to Bismarck and Wilhelm, and sentencing the traitors to terrible tortures and death.

All this came too late. It had already been announced to the country that Prince Luitpold had taken over the government as Regent and when the commission, having in the meantime been set free, made its second attempt, the servants no longer offered any resistance, and the crazed ruler was seized in the corridors of Neuschwanstein. That same night he was taken to Berg Castle, which had been rapidly transformed into a sanatorium, and there placed under medical care. Ludwig gave the impression of being resigned to his fate. He behaved quietly, submitting to all restrictions. Evidently he was a broken man. When the next morning he asked Professor von Gudden if he might go for a walk in the park with him, the latter was convinced of his victory and declined a guard since he wished to show that he trusted his patient. They went off together to the forest towards evening. What happened from that moment on no one has ever found out. When they did not return by eight o'clock, a search was organized. Later that night their dead bodies were fished out of Lake Chiemsee. In all likelihood the huge Ludwig had throttled his psychiatrist and held him under the water, after which he had perished himself, either of his own free will, or in an attempt to escape his jailers across the lake.

After completing his studies at Munich, Father returned to Hrušovany. Emmahof had by this time become a second home for him. None of his family was left at Ivančice. Grandmother Amalie had died on 23 August 1880, and in December of the same year his half-sister Antonia followed Aloisia who had died on 8 April 1879. Grandfather Andreas went to live with Anna who was now Mrs Kubr, at Hustopeče, and the younger sister Angela had

married Jan Remunda who lived at Rosice. His half-brother August was still working as a clerk at Brno, but he, too, would shortly be dead. Ivančice held only childhood memories.

At Emmahof he went back to mural painting.

> They have put up a castle [to use his own words], everything very nice from the style point of view, they've even got a winter garden. But somebody turned the plan round and didn't notice that instead of being on the sunny side they'd put the winter garden to the north. So I've suggested they could make it into a billiards room which I could paint all round.

It was his first big work carried out on solid artistic principles. The frescoes portrayed games from Roman times up to the present day; they were steeped in the historical academicism acquired at Munich, but the main influences were Makart and Doré. Like the greater part of his work at Emmahof, the frescoes no longer exist. They suffered over the years and were finally lost when the castle was destroyed during the fighting in 1945.

Mucha had completed his work in the billiards room and was still undecided as to his future. 'What are your plans?' the Count asked him. 'To paint,' replied Father sadly. He knew that sooner or later he would have to say good-bye and go his own way. 'You must carry on studying. Choose: Rome or Paris.' 'Paris,' he said without much hesitation. He was afraid of Rome. He avoided going there all his life, as though he was afraid of meeting the same fate as those artists who had collapsed under the impact of the town. 'I'm not ripe enough for Rome yet,' he declared, refusing every invitation to go there. It was not until shortly before his death that he decided on going, as though he felt that he could no longer put off this inevitable confrontation.

5

PARIS in 1887 was the heart of a new colonial empire. After the catastrophe of 1870, the expanding metropolis, like Vienna, had burst out of the dam of its ancient fortifications and radically changed the face it had worn for centuries. The work begun by Baron Haussmann was continued with all the rapacity of ruthless prosperity. Haussman drew up a new plan for the city with wide, straight boulevards driven through the tangle of medieval streets, and he would probably not have hesitated to pull down Notre-Dame if it had happened to be in the way of his principal thoroughfares. The Boulevard Saint-Michel in its plunge through the Quartier Latin swallowed up the ancient colleges of Bayeux, Narbonne, Harcourt and wiped out the last remains of the Emperor Julian's Palace, leaving only the baths. The Boulevard Saint-Germain and the rue de Rennes found their victims in the Commanderie de Saint-Jean de Latran and the church of Saint-Benoist-le-Bestourné. The rue Soufflot did away with the famous Jacobins Monastery. Like the London Blitz, the siege of Paris and Prussian cannon freed the architects' hands, fires ate out new gaps among the old houses, public buildings that had long since become unsuitable were damaged beyond repair. A new Hôtel de Ville, faithfully copied from the French Renaissance, replaced the old, gutted building. The Butte des Moulins disappeared to give place to the Opéra. The people of Paris took pride in

all these dramatic changes. Bright electric lights appeared on the Champs-Elysées and the Place de la Concorde. The whole world looked on. The Ville Lumière had been born.

When my father stepped out of the Gare de l'Est in the autumn of 1887, the city looked as we know it today, except that everything was new. The rows of grey houses with black roofs, dormer windows and chimneys, the slate sea of garrets and mansard roofs, which have for us the beauty of disorderliness and decay, had then only just been built or were still under construction; the stone was white, new lead glimmered on the roofs and the façades had not yet become pock-marked with neon signs put up and removed again over several generations. The traffic in the streets moved slower than today but was no less of a problem. There were seventy-five routes with horse-drawn omnibuses and horse-drawn trams, which took people across Paris for 20 centimes if they travelled inside or for 15 'à l'impériale' on the open top deck. For 30 centimes one could change on to another route, and the timetable proudly declared that on each route the 6 to 8 kilometres were covered in less than one hour. The system of issuing numbered tickets at the stops, to insure priority, was already in existence, and some go-ahead companies put into service 'larger vehicles affording ladies the opportunity of a pleasant ride "à l'impériale" '. Presumably with their bustles, hats and sunshades, ladies could not travel on top of the smaller vehicles, quite apart from the danger that on the steep stairs they might have to show more than was seemly of ankles in yarn stockings. But in spite of its popularity and its name the omnibus was not everybody's means of transport. The workers of Paris had to go on foot. A journey to their work and back would have cost them half their daily wage.

Ladies and gentlemen concerned about their status naturally travelled by coach called 'sapin', 'ver rongeur', or more frequently 'fiacre'. The coachmen had all the characteristics of present-day taxi-drivers. When it rained there were none to be found. If they did not wish to stop, they would shout out 'changing horses'. Their speciality was leaving their fiacres unattended at the cab rank, so that clients had to search the neighbouring pubs and drag them away from their wine.

Even though the city transport was supplemented by trains serving the outlying parts and by river buses, known as 'bateaux-mouche' and 'bateaux-hirondelle', the rush hour produced the same traffic jams as today. The confusion was even greater since horses do not have the patience of machines, and drivers from competing omnibus companies endeavoured to make life difficult for each other. Traffic jams are in fact no speciality of the twentieth or of the nineteenth century. In Ancient Rome crossroads used to get choked up despite the efforts of policemen using long sticks to disentangle the jam, until Caesar introduced one-way streets, no parking and no entry signs. In the Paris of the 'eighties such solutions had not yet been thought of; every day between four and six p.m. the hopeless crush in front of the Bourse completely stopped the traffic. It may well be that the only golden age for transport was that short period between the disappearance of the horse-drawn coach and the domination of the streets by the automobile. In 1887, Paris was 'a woman's paradise and a horse's hell'.

Father arrived in Paris with a fellow-student from Munich, a Czech named Karel Václav Mašek, a cheerful, good-hearted young man who had begun life with the same dreams but with a more practical outlook: through-

out the journey he studied French. They stepped into a fiacre and drove to the rue Faubourg St Denis, at the time inhabited by artists and actors from the neighbouring theatres. 'We began by looking for somewhere to live. After a lot of walking we found a room in the Impasse Mazagran, but Mašek did not like it. He had set his heart on a house with a lift and went to look for something else. He must have looked for a long time, because he got as far as the Left Bank and found a room in the rue de Seine.'

Father, who did not insist on a lift, went back to the station for his luggage and stayed where he was. 'So this is Paris,' he no doubt thought to himself as he stood at the window and looked for the first time at the houses opposite, grey roofs and the bit of wintry sky. He must have felt the same anxiety as thousands of young painters before and after him. At that moment there are only two beings in the whole world silently confronting each other: Will I win or will you overcome me? Paris turns a cold, glassy eye on another David facing her, and her belly rumbles with the undigested remains of coaches, easels, canvases and pearl necklaces. Nowhere one sympathetic being to give a helping hand. In Paris, as in death, one is alone.

Father secretly believed various superstitions—or rather he hoped there might be some truth in them. Superstitions can be a refuge against loneliness, surrounding a person with an intimate network of good and evil forces all registering a touching concern about his every step. There is a superstition that the first dream in a strange city will come true. Father went to bed in a state of expectant excitement. But the long sleepless nights in the train let him down. He fell asleep at once and woke up ten

hours later unvisited by dreams. This time destiny was over discreet.

In the morning he set out to explore the neighbourhood. On foot, of course. He would not trust himself to the omnibuses that clattered by in both directions along the Boulevard St Denis. He could not even ask where they were going. Knowing not a word of French he had, as he himself put it, the impression of being deaf. He merely wandered aimlessly, sampling the soft, damp Parisian air after the harsh Czech autumn. In his light three-quarter-length coat, which at home had not been thick enough to keep him from freezing, it seemed like summer, and he was puzzled by men in hoary top hats with dirty scarves round their necks and hands thrust into pockets, stamping and shivering round the roast chestnut stalls. Here, in the overcrowded district of Port St Denis he made his first acquaintance with poverty in Paris. He saw himself surrounded by the fractious, gloomy paupers, exotic creatures from another world, for whom the society of the day had less feeling than it had for the scraggy horses that pulled the cabs. The poor were acceptable either as caricatures or as humble sufferers depicted in the canvases of official salon painters. If we look at the past through the art galleries, we have a distorted impression of the 'eighties. It was not an ideal world of Renoir girls and Degas ballerinas but rather one of pompous bourgeois who admired Cabanel, Gérôme and Bouguereau and reacted with spleen to anything that reminded them of the recent spectre of the Commune.

The Académie Julian, where my father and Mašek registered on the very first day, enjoyed a good reputation, though it was not much different from the Munich Academy. The difference was in the pupils. In Munich

they had been content with copying their professors; here the more gifted ones strove to free themselves. Their problem was that there were now two accepted and ossifying schools: The Salon and The Impressionists. It was a no man's land between generations and the Académie Julian was just about to produce a group of brilliant young painters who were resolved to fill the gap: Vuillard, Roussel, Ranson, Ibela, Bonnard and Sérusier.

During the first few months, before he learnt French, Father was mainly in touch with the handful of his fellow-countrymen who had been settled in Paris for some time. Whether because they are a small nation or because they have an innate instinct for self-preservation, Czechs living abroad cling to each other like limpets. This helps them to carry on, but finally isolates them until they become like so many mummies. In Father, who had by now spent ten years abroad, or at least among Germans, this solidarity with the Czech element almost developed into a vice. Every day at noon he would walk with Mašek from the Académie Julian in the rue Faubourg St Denis to the Avenue de l'Opéra, only because there was a small restaurant run by a Czech couple there, where, as he put it, they could warm their hearts with Czech conversation, before trudging once more halfway across Paris to the Académie where they stayed till 5 p.m.

> After work I used to sit at the open window and sketch, or learn French. Strange waves of sound came up to me from the street: the shouts of the street vendors trundling their hand-carts along the pavements, each advertising himself with his own particular cry. This concert was the essential ingredient of the Parisian atmosphere, spilling over from street to street, the breath of that vivid, many-headed, noisy crowd whose melody intoxicated me.

The life of Paris changed from hour to hour with the

regularity of a theatrical performance. At daybreak an army of sweepers hurled itself on the twelve million square yards of paved and tarred streets; simultaneously, the clanging of bells announced the passing of horse-drawn carts, collecting the boxes of garbage and ash from in front of the houses. A system of uniform dustbins was only introduced several years later, thanks to the *préfet* Poubelle whose name they bear to this day. Before the dustmen appeared on the scene, two-wheeled hand-carts rattled through the streets, pulled by bearded men, old women and children. These were the ragmen who feverishly rummaged through the rubbish boxes before the dustmen took them away. Formerly the whole night was their hunting time but in 1883, when he assumed his duties, Poubelle's first step for the city's sanitation was to issue an order prohibiting the depositing of rubbish from houses during the hours of darkness. This meant that the ragmen had only one or two hours after daybreak to assure their livelihood for the day. Paris seethed over the matter, splitting up into two camps, for and against the ragmen. A stormy debate took place in Parliament, and Poubelle was attacked by an infuriated Press which made the ragmen's cause a political issue of national importance. 'One day the ragmen will learn who are their true friends!' screamed one particularly dramatic leader.

The ragmen, however, learnt nothing. The order became law and the former masters of the sleeping city became the wretched phantoms of the dawn. After they had made off with their pickings and the bells of the dustmen had faded in the distance, the streets were temporarily taken over by women delivering bread. They carried long warm loaves in large scarves tied round their shoulders, and the million-strong city was dependent for its break-

fast on their speed. Next came thousands of workers, clerks, shopgirls and seamstresses, all going to work on foot. The girls went chattering through the streets like a huge flock of sparrows. The seamstresses mostly left home without breakfast, stopping at street-corners or in house entrances where old women sat at tables, selling bowls of white coffee into which the girls would hurriedly dip bread saved over from their dinner. Then, after the streets had emptied yet again, carriages would drive out, top hats, sticks and sunshades appear, the markets opened up, and housewives set out shopping. The cries of the street-vendors mingled with the noises of the traffic. The glazier with window panes in a wooden basket on his back croaked as he looked inquiringly up at the windows: 'Ha! Vitri . . .! Ha! Vitri . . . ha! Vitrier!' His voice rose sharply on the last syllable as though his cry were scaling a lofty impediment. After him came a woman with a basket of water-cress. 'V'là du beau cresson d'fontaine, la santé du corps! A deux sous la botte, à deux sous!' Then a man with willow canes on his shoulder and several baskets over his arm: 'Avez-vous des paniers . . . à faire raccommoder . . . v'là le rac—commodeur de paniers!' Suddenly came a yell from the fish-woman: 'Harengs, qui glacent, qui glacent, harengs nouveaux! Merlan à frire, à frire! Ah, qu'il est beau, le maquereau! Il arrive!' Then a man pushing a hand-cart with apples: 'Cinq sous la livre, la reinette! Cinq sous la livre!' And another: 'Artichauts . . . des gros artichauts! La tendresse! La verduresse!— . . . à deux sous, verts et tendres, à deux sous!' From somewhere else a regular cascade of voices: 'A l'anguille, à l'anguille! à la moule, à la moule! La moule est fraiche! La moule est bonne! Quatre sous le litre!' 'Poulets! Poulets! Mesdames les ménagères, je n'les vends pas trop chers!' 'V'là le

marchand des tripes! Tripes à la mode de Caen! Allons, les ménagères! La tripe n'est pas chère!' There were even two lines of verse:

'Descendez vos plats, vos assiettes, votre argent!
V'là le marchand de tripes à la mode de Caen!'

And the doleful voice of the barrel-maker: 'Tonneaux! A-e-ou des tonneaux à vendre!' The oyster-seller, dressed in a cape as in the Middle Ages: 'A la barque, à la barque! Mangez les huitres! Douze sous la douzaine!' And the potato-seller: 'Pommes de terre au busseau! La Hollande au busseau! V'là la Hollande pas cher!' The chair-mender came with a two-wheeled handcart drawn by a donkey: 'Rempailleur, canneleur de chaises! Avez-vous des chaises à rempailler?' In those happy days even the plumber offered his services from house to house. Instead of calling out he played the refrain of a popular song on a penny-whistle: 'En revenant de la R'vue v'là le poseur de robinets!' Among the street-vendors there were two specialities: the man with a sack slung across his shoulder and several hats one on top of the other on his head, selling old clothes: ' . . . bits!' he cried, ' . . . bits! Chapeaux à vendre! Des bottes et des souliers à vendre!' and a decrepit, rather lovable old man with a wooden basket full of greenery who offered: 'Du mouron pour vos petits oiseaux! En voilà du vert, en voilà du vert . . .' His voice added its peculiar lyric melody to the street symphony, a melody used in that most ardently Parisian of all operas, Charpentier's *Louise*. Whenever my father in his old age heard its music, he would bow his head, plunging deep into the old sounds of the city of his youth and nodding as though discerning a well-known voice. 'Mouron pour les petits oiseaux,' he would say to me, pointing out a melody I did not hear.

There must have been a great magic in the Paris of the 'eighties that still lingers in our imagination, even though two world wars have buried it underneath the débris. From the pavilions in the parks came the strains of Offenbach's music, Verlaine haunted the pubs in the Quartier Latin, every evening the miracle of the electric lights flared up and the streets were jammed with crowds of fiacres, carriages and omnibuses, their polished lamps shining red, green and yellow in the gathering dusk. Yet while horses' hooves still clattered on the Champs-Elysées, the new age was taking shape in the workrooms of engineers and architects drawing up plans for the first line of the Métro and over the rooftops of the city rose the four strutted girders of the Eiffel Tower.

Dear Dad [wrote Father on 20 December 1887].

Christmas is here and no doubt everybody at home is busy rushing around, decorating the Christmas tree, the kids learning carols and wrapping up nuts in glittering silver paper. I don't know yet how I'll be spending Christmas this year. No doubt I'll be wandering around the city and looking at all the happy people. One will be wearing new gloves, another will have a new umbrella or a new stick, another a new cigarette holder, the ladies will have new rings, watches, scarves; children will be playing with rattles, clutching their toys and whining because they're too tired . . . How are things with me? All right. I'm getting on nicely at the Académie and that is good. Last Sunday we had a competition, the subject was Moses striking the rock with his staff and water gushing out. I had even more luck than the last time, I did a whole lot of Jews drinking and being half dead with thirst and I got first prize. This means I've now been entered twice in the book of honour. There were one hundred and twenty-five going in for it. This day is also a memorable one because Mašek and I bought ourselves top hats. Next week we're going to visit the painters Brožík and Hynais and Munkacsy. For that one has to have a top hat. I'm also having a new coat and waistcoat made to go with it and a black frockcoat and

trousers. The things I arrived in cannot be worn here. So much for now, then, and a merry Christmas to you all.

With love,

Your grateful son, Alfonse.

Brožík (1851–1901) and Hynais (1854–1925) were two painters famous in Bohemia, then living in Paris—stars whom my father as a student looked up to with great admiration. Both sailed in the waters of chilly academicism but the nation thought highly of them because Hynais had painted the curtain for the National Theatre, while Brožík had created several popular scenes from Czech history, reproductions of which decorated all school corridors, pubs and patriotic households. Father, although they had very little in common, never ceased to admire Brožík and became one of his devoted friends. In fact he never selected his painter friends according to their artistic allegiance. What others did was less important to him than what they thought and whether their efforts were sincere. In spite of his light-heartedness, his impudence and credulity, he took work extremely seriously. He believed in it more than in talent, maintaining that if an artist wanted to achieve something he had to work sixteen hours a day. This was the criterion he applied to others. He had no patience with laziness and could not bear to see gifted but spineless people frittering away their lives. 'My most valuable friend and ally,' he once said, 'was time. This is what I most needed for my work. How could I ever think of killing my friend with useless amusements?' He had a precisely arranged programme for his first year in Paris. 'From half past eight till twelve and from two till five we were at the Académie Julian; in the evening we worked at home. We did not go to cafés—as a matter of fact there weren't many at that time in

Paris. I knew I had to prepare thoroughly for the tasks ahead of me, and even the whole day was not enough for this.'

Sometimes in the middle of the night, when the streets of Paris are still, I seem to hear steps and over on the other side of the Boulevard St Germain I see a young man with a straw hat on the back of his head and a short pepper and salt jacket, hurrying along with a folder under his arm, full of dreams, convinced that life is a school in which one is always preparing oneself for a great matric. Everything has its point and purpose, everything is part of an educational programme, everything will prove itself necessary and useful when the great day comes. He is hurrying, with his folder under his arm, and dividing us is the empty street, the width of a century.

6

THE spring of 1888 had an operatic setting. The dapper General Boulanger was alternately making love to Madame de Bonnemain and planning to become dictator of France. He had all that was necessary for both: a good figure, a well-cut uniform, a daring moustache and an uncompromising attitude towards Germany. The government, on the other hand, had nothing but a series of scandals to its credit, unveiled by the peculation and shameful abdication of President Grévin. For the public and for Madame de Bonnemain the General was a man in his right place.

It would seem that my father thought so too. He was probably attracted mostly by Boulanger's noisy Germanophobia and in this he was not alone. The defeat at Sedan and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine were searing thorns in the flesh of the French, who were consoling themselves for their misfortunes in Europe by feverishly acquiring colonies. Any policy not specifically aimed at the recovery of Strasbourg was considered to be high treason, the nationalists booed *Lohengrin* off the stage, applauded Boulanger and expressed an uncritical sympathy for everything Slav, be it Tsar or the Tsar's opponents in Siberia. Such minor differences were considered negligible. The feelings of a young man from Moravia, twenty-eight years old, were naturally on the side of the Slavophiles, especially when he too was a recipient of the enthusiasm so generously

heaped on all his fellows. Like all people ruled by their instincts, the nationalists had valid reasons, even if they reacted wrongly. The German Kaiser, Wilhelm I, who died on 9 March, was followed to the grave three months later by his successor Frederick, thus bringing an egoistic maniac who rejoiced in bloodshed to the throne. Wilhelm II immediately set about building up a powerful army and since he had as yet no opportunity of using it, he satisfied his passion for killing at the royal hunts, which took the form of large-scale slaughter. As soon as he had discovered a landowner with good hunting country, he would invite himself to the estate for food and lodging. The landowner would have to construct a brand-new road to his residence, feed and accommodate the entire royal suite with as much pomp as obtained at the Imperial palace, and hire four to five hundred beaters to ensure that Wilhelm bagged all the hares, roebuck and red deer available, both from his host's lands and from the neighbours'. The Emperor, having exterminated every animal within range—the number of carcasses often ran into thousands—would then take his leave of the harassed owners of the estate, assuring them that he had much enjoyed the simple and homely way he had been received, since he preferred to meet his people without causing them the least expense or inconvenience.

His self-esteem was grotesque. 'A soldier must know his Emperor through a three-inch plank,' he declared when a cavalryman failed to recognize him in the dark. The man's commander, Colonel von Natzmar, only succeeded in saving his head by offering to issue his soldiers with photographs of His Majesty in a variety of uniforms. In one year, 3500 years of imprisonment were imposed by German courts for the crimes of doubting the Emperor's

ability as a composer, ruler, poet, shipwright, conqueror, conductor, expounder of the Monroe Doctrine, painter, strategist, circus manager, absolute ruler, infantryman, hunter and paterfamilias. In his orations to soldiers he never tired of repeating that they must be prepared, if necessary, to kill even their own parents and children, and he was sublimely convinced that the Hohenzollern family had received the Imperial crown straight from the hands of the Almighty. This sort of neighbour could only spread fear and, as the year 1914 was to show, fear that was justified.

With Paris seething on the threshold of Boulanger's dictatorship, the general excitement also affected the small colony of Slav students whose number had grown every month. One day Father and Widhopf were walking down the crowded Boulevard St Michel

> discussing vigorously one plan after another when suddenly my eye fell on Widhopf's red, richly embroidered shirt. 'I say, Widhopf, that's a magnificent shirt you're wearing! I've been admiring it all the evening.' Widhopf stopped on the spot, thrust a book into my hand, and before I could realize what was happening had torn off his coat and waistcoat and was pulling his shirt over his head. A crowd of people had collected around us expecting a fight. But when they saw a half-naked student giving away his shirt and saying: 'You like it? Then take it!' they started clapping and cheering until the scene developed into a real demonstration. 'Vive la Russie! Vivent les Russes!' They surged around us as far as the bridge, Widhopf walking all excited at my side, naked to the waist.

At the Académie Julian, Father had three teachers. There was Jules Joseph Lefebvre (1836–1912), a fashionable portrait-painter of the *beau monde* whose private studio looked more like a social salon than a painter's workroom, with its throne on a raised platform for society

ladies to sit for his vast portraits. The son of an Amiens baker, his career was typical of the contemporary masters of academicism. Having entered Cogniet's studio at the age of sixteen, he won second prize with his picture 'Coriolanus among the Volsci' in 1859, and in 1861 the Grand Prix for his 'Death of Priam' together with a scholarship to the Villa Medici in Rome, that grave of so many talents. He specialized in idealized female types and appropriate themes: 'Bacchus and the Nymph', 'Cornelia', 'Truth', 'Pandora', 'Psyche', and 'Lady Godiva'. Péladan called him the Sully-Prudhomme of painting, whatever that may mean. Father's second teacher, Gustave Boulanger (1824–88), died soon after his arrival at the Académie, and only the third one, Jean-Paul Laurens (1838–1921), was a painter of any great consequence. His series of large historical canvases were widely admired and today are mainly known for the fact that Rodin, with whom he had a long-standing friendship, sat for one of his Merovingian warriors in the St Geneviève fresco at the Pantheon. There were other teachers at the Académie but none of them was really responsible for the development of the pupils who subsequently made the school famous. According to Maurice Denis, 'even the boldest of the students knew next to nothing about Impressionism. They admired Bastien Lepage, spoke with respect of Puvis de Chavannes (although secretly doubting whether he could draw), discussed Péladan and Wagner, read superficial, decadent literature and got excited about mysticism, the Cabbala and the Chaldean calendar.' A decisive influence was to come from outside when Sérusier met Gauguin and took up his cause.

It is said that all great cities have only twelve hundred inhabitants. The circle of people in which a man moves remains a village wedged in among other villages. Paris is the sole exception, having not twelve hundred but one hundred and twenty people. Paris was and still is composed of countless little groups, each gravitating round a single personality. Sometimes it seems as though these groups are little solar systems, circling in space millions of light years from each other. They are no hermetic societies or deliberately conceived establishments. For every single person Paris is a vast wilderness. If a few people come together they merely push the frontiers of that wilderness a few steps further away. There are exceptions—people moving from one circle to another like messengers or visitors from outer space; outsiders with too strong a personality to be satellites and too weak a personality to become suns. In other countries groups also exist. Artists tend to congregate like every minority. But there a generation creates a homogeneous impression, its members supporting each other, attacking each other, their roads continually crossing. In Paris one has the impression that two-thirds of all the contemporaries are non-existent. Where were Renoir, Degas and Pissarro in 1888 when Gauguin was first heard of at the Académie Julian? Twenty minutes' walk away, at Montmartre. And yet for the young Bonnard or Denis they were mere concepts, pictures which they went to see in a gallery. Other groups knew still less about each other. Each one admired its god, great or small, and lived in his reflection. In Paris a man without acquaintances equals nought. His value increases in direct proportion to the number of names he can place before that nought. Some people have made a career without a single stroke of the brush, without writing a single

word. But they have known people. *Connaître tout le monde* is more valuable than to have talent.

Father also moved within a limited sphere in Paris. Because he did not want to be merely a painter—he carried with him the deadweight of nationalism—he was more attracted to thinking artists than to artists who dealt with purely technical problems. In this respect chance which brought him to the Académie Julian could not have served him better. Later, for the same reasons, he exchanged the circle of Sérusier for a different group, then for yet another one, until he himself became the centre of one of those solar systems composing the kaleidoscopic picture of the *fin de siècle.*

It was the first part of his stay in Paris that proved most beneficial to him. Sérusier and his friends were young people from good families who had come to the Académie Julian with a broad general education. They were not instinctive primitives knowing nothing but their craft, they were not satisfied simply with colour or mere form; most important to them was the idea which they were looking for the right way to express. Like all intellectuals, they admired folklore in which they saw the roots of all artistic creation. This was a welcome attitude, eagerly embraced by my father with his national approach to the function of art. During his first months in the new environment he lost his assurance. At last he got away from the provincialism of Vienna and Munich and abandoned masters whose influence, as he could now observe, did not reach beyond the State frontiers. Vienna, Munich, Prague and Brno shared the same ideological atmosphere, worried about the same things. In Paris all this melted away. Germanization and the problems of the Czechs in Austria appeared ridiculously petty when seen from Paris. The

Parisians knew nothing about them and looked upon the Slavs as one whole—a vast flood stretching from Poland to Vladivostok. The narrative, historical scenes so much loved in Munich and Vienna aroused nothing but scorn among young Parisian painters, some of whom declared themselves for Impressionism while others looked even further ahead and spoke of Cézanne. Father came to realize that all was not well with the salon artists whom he had so far known only as distant stars, but at the same time he was quite lost among the paintings exhibited in the Goupil Gallery or at Father Tanguy's shop. Moreover, the theoretical disputes regarding colour and the reconstruction of objects in space meant little to a man who was a born linearist.

His meeting with a handful of students at the Académie Julian, who did not consider painting as an end in itself, was infinitely comforting to him. Their ideas were vague, they were still flirting with Impressionism, but they were looking for something new. In addition, his fellow-pupils at the Lefebvre studio put him on the trail of many things that were new to him. He was not a great reader and such reading as he did was confined to Czech and German literature. Now for the first time he learnt of the existence of William Morris, Maeterlinck, Verlaine and the new movement called Symbolism whose manifesto had been published shortly before, in 1886, by Jean Moréas.

In the same year the Impressionists as an acknowledged group broke up. Clearly the time had come to set up a new style, and the young people at the Académie Julian made up their minds to find it. When Sérusier returned from le Pouldu where under Gauguin's leadership he had painted 'The Talisman', they received his picture at first with a mixture of curiosity and scepticism, but Sérusier's

enthusiasm was infectious. Before long he had convinced them that in Brittany he had discovered 'a new light'. He became an enthusiastic apostle of Gauguin whose ideas he handed on reshaped in his own way.

The youth of that time were fond of setting up societies, circles and brotherhoods. There was something romantically boyish about them, kept alive by the antagonism of society. Anybody attempting anything new looked upon himself as a pioneer in a wilderness swarming with hostile natives. No great fantasy was required. The public vied with the official critics in heaping scorn and insults on new works. Gauguin was obliged to sign the still life which he gave to Madame Gloanec at Pont Aven 'Madeleine B.' so as to ensure that customers did not walk out of the pub on seeing a picture by that 'cochon de Gauguin' on the wall. Exhibitions ended in failure. Anyone with any aspirations had to reckon with penury. Nor did any moral support come from those who only the day before had seen their canvases stabbed by the umbrellas of indignant viewers. They had vindicated what they stood for and any new movements went against the grain. Vollard recalls Degas's peevish retort when asked if he did not feel Maeterlinck's influence in a particular picture: 'Sir, the blue comes out of a tube, not out of an inkwell.' Such isolation was fertile soil for fervent friendships and defensive alliances. People of the same type were fighting Red Indians in America and exploring unmapped territories of Africa. Pioneering was the order of the day. In this spirit the group of young people at the Académie Julian set up their brotherhood which met in a wine tavern in the Passage Brady; they called themselves Prophets—Les Nabis—and Ranson subsequently gave each one a special prophetic title. Sérusier was Le Nabi à La Barbe Rutil-

lante; Maurice Denis, Le Nabi aux Belles Icones; Bonnard, Le Nabi Japonard. They used allusions in speaking to each other, employing code words—behaving in fact just like boys playing at Treasure Island. Their game went on so long that they almost began to take it seriously.

Meanwhile, however, they continued with their nudes and compositions and went, full of curiosity, to watch the progress of the Eiffel Tower which, in the opinion of reputable artists, would shortly disfigure Paris. Father had his Slavs as well, whom he met in the rue de Seine, and the thought of his faraway homeland which he increasingly idealized.

> In fact I look forward to my return to Bohemia and Moravia with all my soul [he wrote in one of his letters]. I feel that I shall do something that will bring me closer—but closer to what? I don't know. I only feel it and have confidence. In the meantime I can only rejoice that I am making progress and that my efforts have not been in vain. The days are getting longer now, the light is conquering the darkness—a sign that we shall be bidding farewell to something so as to erect something new in its place. It is Easter—the most beautiful season in Paris. Clusters of white and pink blossoms are glistening against a dark blue sky. Clamart, Bellevue, Saint-Germain, Meudon, Versailles—it's like walking in Paradise. Everything is open wide to the sun, to joy and the spring. It is not summer yet, but there are all the signs of summer. The sun is setting, but it is as though the day refuses to end, the birds swirl and twist in the darkened sky, filling the air with their silvery sounds.

That was his Paris in the spring, yet nowhere is there any reference to what usually happens at that season, not a single mention of a woman. Earlier records contain no evidence of a love affair either. Only once in a letter written to my mother in 1903 he confessed: 'I was sixteen years old. She was fifteen. We were children. I prayed to her and never dared to touch her in case I should soil

my feelings. She died.' Who the girl was nobody knows. Not even the parish register throws any light on the matter. She disappeared from his life and for years no other girl took her place. When the summer holidays came he cheerfully quit Paris leaving nothing behind, except a year's work. Count Khuen awaited him at Munich on 12 July, expecting a full account of his studies. Every month he had been sending Father 200 francs and wished to be assured that his money was not being wasted. Whenever during the past year he had been without a letter or a specimen drawing from Paris for any length of time, he had instructed his secretary to inform Father that 'His Grace the Count has been upset by the long silence of your honour' and that 'it would be good if your honour would write and inform His Grace the Count as to how his studies are proceeding'. The account which he gave of himself at Munich was evidently found satisfactory because Father continued his journey to Hrušovany and spent his holidays at Emmahof. He worked the whole two months, and more, painting further frescoes on the castle walls.

> Stripped of all its flowers, furniture and decorations, the room made a drastic impression with its utter bareness. I was all the more eager to mark out at least the various panels. The enemy could be more easily overcome once he was divided up into sections. After a few days the place was completely clotted up with heaps of furniture, bottles, big and small, draperies, clothing and models. I had nobody to help me, preferring to stay alone, and my peace was disturbed only once in a week on Sundays. There would be a mass of horses, servants and elegant carriages in front of the castle as inquisitive neighbours drove up to see how the painting was coming along. I rested and started again on Monday. I used every hour of daylight, but even so I was unable to finish the work by the end of the summer, and went back to Paris only in the middle of November.

7

FATHER returned neither to his room in the Impasse Mazagran nor to the Académie Julian. He went straight from the station to the Place Saint-Sulpice and looked for a room on the Left Bank. As usual, he took the first one available. On the corner of the rue d'Assas and the rue Bara stood one of those countless little hotels of the Quartier Latin with dark winding staircases and small rooms furnished with nothing but a bed, a table and two chairs. Cupboards were considered an unnecessary luxury. 'I rented a room on the second floor at No. 1, rue Bara, right next to the Jardin du Luxembourg. I ate my meals in a small dining-room next door and entered the Académie Colarossi which was a few steps further in the rue de la Grande Chaumière. On that day I became an inhabitant of the Quartier Latin.'

Every generation in its old age maintains that the Quartier Latin has ceased to exist. My father made the same assertion, after spending the best twenty-five years of his life there. So did Murger's Bohemian contemporaries and so, no doubt, will the present-day inhabitants of garrets and third-class hotels once they grow old and their friends' seats in the cafés around St Germain des Près are occupied by people they have never heard of. The Quartier Latin dies with each generation only to be born again with the next. In the year 1889, the eve of the World Exhibition, the district was starting out on one of its

Models in the studio, 1896–1903

Models in the studio, 1896–1903

glorious epochs. The students of the Sorbonne were no more the only element dominating the narrow streets and boulevards between the rue St Jacques and the Boulevard Montparnasse. Les Rapins, as the students at the Académie des Beaux Arts were called, had spread from the rue Bonaparte and were now well entrenched in the numerous studios put up by enterprising landlords in courtyards, gardens and on the roofs. The eccentric clothes worn by artists were coming out of fashion but the *pélérine* or hooded cape, which Chaunard had to discard to enable Mimi Pinson to die more contented, was still worn. The usual thing was a top hat, but at that particular time the Quartier Latin was engaged in a passionate dispute concerning the future of the beret. It had made its appearance as a new fashion among artists and had caused an outburst of controversy. The discussion had been transferred to the stage of the Paradis-Latin, a new centre of amusement opened on the Left Bank to compete with the Folies Bergères. 'But here,' according to a contemporary report, 'the supporters of the beret have not convinced their opponents either and we do not believe it has any future. Something else will have to be found, or we shall have to rest content with the attire of past ages . . .' Clearly, even in such matters, prophesying does not pay.

Those who anxiously carp at the morals of today's youth should study the history of the Quartier Latin, an encyclopaedia of teenage behaviour over the centuries. Students in the Middle Ages were certainly more tiresome than today, and the bailiffs even more powerless since the offenders could at any time take refuge on inviolable university soil. Moreover all churches and monasteries had the right to grant asylum. Bands of students would enjoy themselves attacking the guardians of peace, leaving

them lying on the ground, beaten to a state of unconsciousness. The constable Gautier Rollard, anxious to preserve his skin, hit upon the novel idea of sending a band of musicians ahead of him when he was on the beat. In 1406 the prefect Guillaume de Tignonville had two students imprisoned for robbery and murder. The whole Quartier Latin was up in arms, and both professors and students demanded their release. The prefect, thinking he could take a short cut towards solving the problem of juvenile delinquency, had both prisoners hung. The University went on strike and closed its gates for four months. In the France of the Middle Ages this was considered to be such a disaster that the secular powers had to step in; not only was the prefect suspended but he personally had to remove the two bodies from the gallows and kiss each of them on the mouth. In the eighteenth century it was common practice for students to carry a sword as soon as they reached the age of fifteen. They would make use of every opportunity to provoke passers-by to a duel, and when a herd of pigs was driven through the Quartier Latin the students amused themselves by piercing the unfortunate creatures with their blades.

In 1888 the reputation enjoyed by the Quartier Latin among respectable citizens was no better. After the war of 1870, the so-called 'Brasseries des Femmes' designed primarily for young men, sprouted up all over the Left Bank. Here girls dressed in low necks and short skirts had to induce their clients to drink in order to recover money exchanged every morning for three to four hundred francs worth of counters. A novelty of a more moral kind was roller-skating which in those days came to rival the sport of riding a velocipede. Every day from noon till evening

young people went roller-skating on the polished parquet floor at the Bal Bullier where four times a week an evening dance was held with a programme that included Valentin le Desossé and his no less famous partners, Grille d'Egout and La Goulue. Le Desossé, as we know him from the poster designed by Toulouse-Lautrec for the Moulin Rouge, had a long slim body which he prolonged by a top hat of unusual height, a bony, deathly pale face, and wore a black frock-coat which reached to the knees of his thin legs in their narrow creaseless trousers. He was the son of a lawyer and started La Goulue on her career when he discovered her dancing in one of the very low cabarets at the Montmartre. Now at the summit of their fame, the pair alternated between the Moulin Rouge and the Bal Bullier. At eleven o'clock in the evening the queens of the great demi-monde would arrive in their fantastic dresses from the Right Bank and to enthusiastic ovations, descend the wide stairway in the full gaze of their admirers. At midnight the Bal Bullier closed down and the students would wander off with their *lorettes* to the alehouses on the Boulevard St Michel. The Bal Bullier fell silent, guarded only by the statue of Marshal Ney, shot by a firing squad on the very spot where a while ago La Goulue was whipping up her leg, arrested for ever in Lautrec's drawings like the arm of the bronze marshal urging his soldiers into the attack.

Father, who was not a sporting type, did not go to the Bal Bullier either for roller-skating or dancing. The Place de l'Observatoire had other attractions for him. Jugglers, athletes and wrestlers with curling moustaches used to perform there in their short striped bathing trunks to the strains of a barrel-organ. All his life Father carried a sketchbook in his pocket, tirelessly noting everything in

the streets that attracted him, every incident, every figure or unusual face. He drew the athletes outside the Bal Bullier; then he went on to the Jardin des Plantes, sketching the bizarre shapes of animals and exotic plants, or wandered along to the rue Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire where the long grey wall of the Salpetrière enclosed the last refuge of the aged and mentally ill. They sat on benches, stiff and oblivious, staring at the iron railings, while nurses conducted visitors, pointing out like tourist guides cases of particular interest, giving detailed information about their madness. Once a year, halfway through Lent, a masked ball was held at the Salpetrière to which the management invited students and artists. In the hall decorated with paper garlands, idiots and schizos in fantastic masks would stagger round to the rhythm of the waltz and manic-depressives danced with old women from the neighbouring poorhouse. In Paris there was amusement for everyone: Grand Guignol, the Musée Grévin, Salpetrière or the enclosures in the Jardin de l'Acclimatation where the public could watch caged families of African Negroes, Eskimos or Lapps.

These strolls on a sunny afternoon were only short intervals in Father's daily routine. He worked hard at the Académie Colarossi where he had entered his name for all three courses, which meant staying there most of the days from morning till evening. Sunday was his only free time, and he would go to the Louvre, stop to browse at the *bouquinistes*' stalls, or watch bearded men squatting on the embankment clipping poodles for the young ladies who on Sunday mornings brought their pets to the Left Bank for a hair-do. He would eat his lunch at Husák's Czech restaurant near the Opéra and return by way of the Rond-Point with its merry-go-rounds and past the Troca-

déro to see how the World Exhibition was getting on or to enjoy the new Parisian attraction: panorama, presenting the incredible spectacle of landscapes or historical events. This was not yet the cinema but almost, a motionless circorama in technicolor. The public was getting ready for the illusion of moving pictures; all that remained to be done was to invent them. Occasionally, if he was lucky, he could observe a scene that excited him profoundly—a colourful balloon rising over the roofs of Paris with its intrepid aeronaut swinging in the basket.

On 30 January 1889, a news flash from Austria announced an event that has never lost its romantic undertone. Crown Prince Rudolph had been found dead at Mayerling Castle. From the outset the whole affair was shrouded in a tantalizing atmosphere of mystery due to the floundering of the Imperial court in its desperate efforts to hush up the scandal. Francis Joseph had forced Rudolph into an unhappy marriage with Princess Stephanie, and when the disharmony between the two had become all too apparent, the Crown Prince asked for permission to divorce his wife and marry the Baroness Vetsera, a celebrated Viennese belle. The Emperor refused and Rudolph went off to the hunting lodge of Mayerling where the rendezvous of the two lovers usually took place.

The next morning, 30 January, a carriage drove up to the railway station at Baden. A man got out, dressed in hunting kit, and haughtily asked the station master to provide him with a special train to Vienna. It was Count Hoyos hurrying to the Emperor with the news that the Crown Prince 'had had an accident while out hunting at Mayerling'. Before he reached Vienna, the capital was full of the wildest rumours. Hoyos gave the news first to the Empress who immediately enlisted the aid of the actress

Katharina Schratt, the Emperor's intimate friend, and went with her to Francis Joseph's study.

A whole day passed before the court decided to issue a communiqué announcing that the Crown Prince had had a stroke. The doctors, however, refused to sign such a downright lie and the following day the court had to admit to suicide, thus causing loss of confidence among the public and trouble with the church. Only the Pope had the power to allow a church burial for a suicide and Austrian diplomacy managed to bring this about only with the greatest difficulty and against the dogged opposition from Cardinal Rampolla whose stubbornness was later to cost him the mitre; on the death of Leo XIII, when Rampolla was favourite for the papal throne, the Emperor ordered Cardinal Pozyn to veto his election.

The admission of suicide was, however, belated. The suspicion that the scandal was of even larger proportions supported the fact that the police had sealed off the whole area of Mayerling and that the court kept a pregnant silence regarding Baroness Vetsera. Her obituary stated that she had died at Venice but it became known that the police inspector Habrda conveyed her corpse next night in a carriage from Mayerling to Heiligenkreuz where he buried it secretly in the convent's churchyard.

The mystery was enhanced by a number of discrepancies. It appeared to be a drama of passion, but Rudolph had known Baroness Vetsera only eighty days and was a hardened philanderer who never took his affairs seriously. The Baroness had written several farewell letters; she alone could have had any interest in a suicide pact, but the weapon had been found in Rudolph's dead hand. 'He died like a tailor,' the Emperor declared in disgust when he learnt the whole truth. Probably Baroness Vetsera did in

fact castrate Rudolph in a moment of hysteria. The double death would then be a logical, if less romantic, conclusion to the drama of Mayerling.

My father heard of the tragedy as he was having breakfast at the café near his hotel. The event was disturbing—not only because it took place in the part of Austria he knew well. The Crown Prince Rudolph had allowed himself to be crowned King of Bohemia and had raised hopes that once he ascended the throne there might be some improvement in the lot of the Czechs. His death was a bad omen. Yet another blow was to come when Father returned to his room. A letter written in the neat hand of Count Khuen's secretary lay on the table. 'I take the liberty of informing your honour,' it stated, 'that His Grace the Count deems it fitting that he should discontinue his financial assistance to your honour.' Full stop, end.

After the first shock Father reacted with the helpless anger of a man who has been wronged. All of a sudden, in the middle of successful progress in his studies, he found himself in Paris without a farthing—a city where, as he knew by now, only the rich could borrow. It is not clear what led the Count to his decision, since he was genuinely fond of his protégé. In a letter from Hrušovany, dated 25 July 1891, which is evidently an answer to the first news he had received from Father after a year and a half, Count Khuen writes:

> Your letter, and still more your work, gave me great pleasure . . . The description of your life I found very interesting; it pleased me and reassured me and, above all, I am glad about your successful struggle. The medicine was strong but good; it was only with regret that I used it, but I think the moment was correctly chosen, and I am filled with pride that it has brought results.

This supports one of Father's subsequent versions, that Count Khuen stopped his assistance on educational grounds—to compel him to struggle for his existence. And yet, can this really be so? A man who has had a hard life from childhood would hardly need such schooling, especially in the middle of the academic year, less than two months after he had completed the last frescoes at Emmahof. A letter from Mr Berger, who had in the meantime been transferred from Mikulov to Purgstall in Lower Austria, dated 5 May 1889, contains only one reference which may be connected with the recent breach: 'Thanks to you Count Khuen is acquiring a collection of very valuable things which he is well able to appreciate. But you are right, you're not the one who's footing the bill.'

In time, however, the whole affair got thoroughly mixed up. Father had an astonishing capacity for getting muddled, misdating events and mistaking one person for another. He was so used to this that in New York, when instead of going to a party arranged in his honour he wandered into another house where another party happened to be going on, he remained there for two hours, quite unperturbed by the fact that there was not a soul he knew. Once he even produced a photograph of President Masaryk and his grandchildren, declaring it was himself. It is not surprising that in the course of his long life the two fateful events of 30 January 1889 merged: the following version of what happened appears in his memoirs:

> It was in January 1889 that the terrible news came. Count Khuen, having got involved in some wretched speculation, went off to Gandegg, the castle of his forebears, and shot himself! Poor man, poor father! What a disaster for his delightful children—hardly had they taken one look at the world when such a

terrible price was demanded of them. The fateful blow brought painful consequences. I found myself deprived of means. Under such circumstances there was nobody I could turn to. I had to leave the Académie and endeavour to stand on my own feet.

This version remained in circulation with such persistence that I myself began to believe it. Whatever educational reason the Count's decision may have had, it meant that Father did indeed, as he relates, have to end his studies and expend all his energy on earning money. There followed months of deprivation. He would rather have died of starvation than borrow from anybody. As we shall see, he was not far from this when destiny decided once again to help him on to his feet.

8

FATHER had learned to cope with poverty in his youth when he and Stantejský had marked off their daily ration of bread with a piece of chalk. Now he was reduced to a diet of lentils which he bought by the bagful and boiled in an old tin over the fire. They were good, cheap and easy to cook and for a time they provided adequate nourishment.

But not even lentils last for ever. Things began to look really bad. He sent some drawings to Prague periodicals, but they were not published until the worst was over. He drew for Lévy, the printer who was to become one of his main publishers, little soldiers as cut-out sheets for children. With Lévy's few francs he bought coal to keep himself from freezing, and waited. He was cold and exhausted. He stopped going out. He fell ill and had to stay in bed. The fire went out, there was nothing to eat and the frost stole through walls and window into the room. Solicitous destiny, that was to have cared for him, was refusing to co-operate and had apparently forgotten him. It was the old cliché once again. Ever since Murger wrote his *Vie de Bohême*, the artist had to starve, to lie bedridden in a freezing room and play out the inevitable melodrama which moves no one. From the street came the cries of the ragman, the basket-maker, the chickweed-seller. 'Mouron pour les petits oiseaux!' At the Bal Bullier, La Goulue lifted her skirts to show her frills and black stockings;

horse-drawn omnibuses rattled along the boulevards, and the skeleton of the Eiffel Tower pierced the clouds high above the city. The rules of the game had to be observed: empty fireplace, dirty wallpaper, mouse nibbling under the table, cold light falling through unwashed windows. Now for the strings, *pianissimo*, the tenor preparing for his aria, the orchestra keyed up for the last-minute appearance of the hero. Nothing happened. The violins kept up their *pianissimo*; the raised baton was quivering in the dim light of the pit. The tenor had not yet finished making up in the dressing-room.

In the reign of Louis-Philippe, a French lithographer named Bourrelier opened up a printing works in Havana. By 1860 he was able to return to France with enough money to go into partnership with the printer Testu-Masson. His son Henri joined Armand Colin's publishing house, first as editor, then as head of a department, and finally, using money from the sale of the Testu-Masson firm, as co-owner. In 1889 he was editing Colin's *Petit Parisien Illustré*, a magazine that featured stories by popular and now long-forgotten authors, inexpensively and rather badly illustrated. M. Henri Bourrelier appeared one day in the ice-cold room in the rue Bara. He found Father in bed, hungry and miserable. The melodrama in the Quartier Latin had taken its customary turn.

It is not clear why M. Bourrelier decided that Mucha, of all the fifty thousand artists living in penury, most urgently needed his help. According to M. Michel Bourrelier, the present owner of Messrs Armand Colin, he received a letter from Father asking for work. This sounds slightly out of character. Mucha was not the person to write begging letters to a stranger. To intercede on others'

behalf, yes. For himself he would not raise a finger. However, starving and twenty-eight, he may have seen things differently.

M. Bourrelier, an enthusiastic young talent scout, was pleased with his find. He ordered some illustrations, obtained from M. Colin an advance, sent a doctor to the rue Bara and in a few days Father was once again at this drawing board. The little pocket sketchbooks, full of scenes from Parisian life, began to yield dividends.

Artists in the nineteenth century were generally very conscientious, and Father never thought of drawing anything without a model. Clothing, the folds in material, expression—everything had to be strictly in accordance with reality. Only when he was satisfied that his basic design was authentic to the last detail, did he simplify and stylize. Now, unable to pay models, he fell back on the sketchbooks that he had filled with unremitting industry while floundering through Paris, and his first illustrations, even though poorly reproduced by a hack engraver, are a real slice of life.

Typically, further help arrived when the crisis was past. The Prague publisher Šimáček accepted his drawings and offered him the job of illustrating a long epic poem called *The Adamites*. Father, in his usual way, accepted the commission and then began to worry whether he could do it. He was not a great reader. The Adamites, a religious sect which had detached itself from the Hussite movement, were only a name to him. From Makart and his teacher Laurens he knew that a historical picture must be painted in its proper setting with original costumes. This presented a problem. Where was he going to find the armour, maces, lances and all the other paraphernalia of the Hussite arsenal?

When the manuscript arrived, he saw that destiny was busy once more. The Adamites, in their reforming zeal, had gone even further than the New Testament, rejecting everything man had added to the Will of God and getting right back to Adam. They took over an uninhabited island in the river Otava and set out to live as the first people in paradise, naked and sharing fire, food and women. God's warriors could not tolerate such a deviation a few miles from Tabor—the stronghold of true faith. They took a week off between two battles with the Crusaders, invaded the Adamites' island, killed some in the assault and burned the rest on the spot. When Father finished reading the poem, he felt rather sorry for the poor Adamites but he was also greatly relieved and taking a deep breath got blissfully down to work. All he needed for his historical setting was a nude in the open air.

Mucha was back in circulation. When he was forced to quit the Académie Colarossi, he had stopped seeing his friends and shut himself up in his room. Now, as things were getting brighter, his old companion from Munich, Luděk Marold (1865–98), arrived from Prague to begin his career as a successful and sophisticated illustrator. Father and Marold decided to celebrate in a typically Bohemian manner by cooking plum dumplings. Plums, wrapped in flour-paste and stewed, sprinkled with sugar and swimming in melted butter, are to a Czech the epitome of bliss, especially if covered with ground poppy-seed.

This last ingredient was the problem. Parisians had never heard of eating poppy-seed and there was none to be had either at the grocer's or in the market. Finally they

discovered a bunch of dried poppy-pods hanging in a dingy herbalist's shop. The chemist was horrified. 'Poppy-seed? That's opium, Monsieur. Prohibited by law. Not even a pinch without a prescription.' They begged and pleaded. Finally the man softened, broke off two pods, carefully shook out the seed and offered them dried shells.

The poppy dream had to be abandoned.

> I fished out a metal wash basin and cleaned it until it shone. Ludek went across to the baker and brought flour and salt. While he was mixing the dough in the wash basin, I went to get sugar and butter. When I returned he had already ranged a neat row of flour balls on my drawing board, and was tossing them one by one into boiling water. It wasn't a success. The plums were good, but the dough—well, neither of us could make himself swallow it. We ate the plums and standing at the window, lobbed the dough down on people we did not like. Perhaps it was a good thing that we did not succeed. We might have squandered all our money on cooking and we could not afford such luxury.

Marold, the easy-going man of the world, was the exact opposite of Mucha with his serious ascetic character. For each of them their incongruous friendship meant an excursion into a strange and unknown world. Marold had his love affairs, Father his philosophy. All they had in common was an indefatigable industry, which for Marold brought tuberculosis and a premature death. Both worked fourteen to sixteen hours a day in a small airless room full of tobacco smoke. When the effects of their unhealthy way of life became apparent, they called on an old doctor who lived in the neighbourhood, complaining that they could not sleep and suffered from buzzing in the head.

'You need to take a break for at least an hour every day,

stop thinking about work and take up some healthy sport,' he told them. They obeyed. Every day they went to the café from five to six o'clock and played crap.

Another friend with whom Father shared his early privations in Paris was a Czech named Vácha, an ex-student from Munich. 'Vácha managed things well,' he wrote.

> He only painted aristocrats and moved in high circles. He went around dressed like a lord. His distinguished customers made him break in their new clothes to give them a slightly worn look. As he had a large studio in the Avenue du Maine, I used to go there and work on the Adamites. Vácha was painting the portrait of a cardinal and I was doing these naked heretics. I had to help him with the hands, which he always found difficult. Once he was commissioned to paint a big Crucifixion scene or something of the sort, and the mercenaries and pagans were all standing with their hands behind their backs or turned so you could not see them. In Paris I always did them for him, and in return he helped us keep body and soul together. He invariably managed to borrow money or persuaded Père Michaud at the restaurant to let us eat on credit. There was also Krämer, a Viennese painter who had a grant. Whenever we got into a fix, Krämer had to dig into his grant, so things went quite well. Sometimes he did it automatically; at other times he needed a prod. One beautiful Sunday the three of us were having lunch together, but Vácha and I hadn't a penny. We were already in the red with Michaud and there was no hope of getting any more from him. When he had finished eating, Vácha was getting restless because he had a date at Versailles, but this time Krämer seemed unwilling to deliver. Vácha was desperate. Seeing several flies feeding on the remains of our food, he pointed to a particularly plump one and turned to Krämer: 'See that fat fly there? Bet you one louis I'll swallow it.' A nimble swipe and—plop! the fly was in his mouth. But he couldn't get the beastly thing down. Finally, sweating profusely and red in the face, he managed to swill it down with beer. Flushed with victory, he regained his composure and waited for the bet to be duly paid. Krämer,

however, grabbed his hat, muttered 'Schweinekerl!' and walked out.

One day a visitor called at the rue Bara who was to have a considerable influence on the next stage of Father's life. Slewinski was a Polish painter who was also studying at Colarossi, and he wanted Mucha's help with a composition. This was nothing exceptional. Even in his Munich days he was often consulted by fellow-students for his advice on particularly difficult problems. In Paris this happened even more frequently.

Slewinski looked around the wretched room, saw the pot of lentils on the fire and drew his own conclusions. 'How are things with you?' 'So so. It varies.' 'No good being all on your own, you should come out more often. Come on, there is a place we can eat opposite Colarossi's. Nothing but old friends, you know.'

Father knew the big Slav heart when he saw it. He put on his coat and the two went along to the rue de la Grande Chaumière. 'Here I should plant a milestone to mark the place,' he was to write later.

It was not a restaurant Slewinski brought me to, but a crémerie owned by Madame Charlotte, who was known throughout the neighbourhood. A widowed Alsatian whose husband, an Army officer, was killed during the Siege of Paris in 1870, Madame Charlotte eked out her widow's pension by feeding a crowd of students. She had undoubtedly once been a beauty but now her enormous size would have made her a good model for a memorial to Alsace. To her, the customers were like her own children. She would sit down at the table with them and advise or comfort them, or tell in her hard French/German accent of the Siege of Paris and the communards, and of how in '70 'they caught and ate the sewer-rats'.

Slewinski did more than persuade my father to return to his friends. He found him a room at No. 13, rue de la

Sarah Bernhardt. Portrait study in Indian ink, 1896

Summer Autumn

From the 'Four Seasons' decorative panels, 1896

Grande Chaumière, immediately above Madame Charlotte's *crémerie*. Here, with due ceremony, Mucha moved in with all his possessions.

This was a great event for the rue de la Grande Chaumière, not so much for the abundance of my belongings as for the bizarre procedure. I had an old suitcase dating back to Mikulov and various bits of half-ironed clothing. My underclothes got into the suitcase all right, but I had to carry the other things in my hands. As for the pictures, some could be rolled up, but most of them were stretched out on frames. I didn't have far to go as the rue de la Grande Chaumière was just round the corner, but that narrow staircase above Madame Charlotte's place! It made a very sharp turn at the first floor; and my room was at the end of the corridor. We tried to get the pictures in that way, but in vain. I, therefore, had to dump everything down on the pavement and pull my property up on string, piece by piece, through the window. By evening, when I had finally moved in, the entire rue de la Grande Chaumière knew how many collars and shoes I possessed and had seen each of my pictures exhibited.

In my room was a large French bed, a ladies' washstand with looking-glass, some chairs and a curious armchair bought at a pawnshop for ten francs. Behind the bed was a small alcove for hanging clothes and putting shoes, which I screened with a curtain. There were two windows, but I used to cover up the one near the door so as not to have light coming from two sides. The floor was in the French manner of red hexagonal tiles, and the rest of the decoration consisted of my pictures. I used to work at the washstand, sitting on the peculiar armchair. That is how I spent my first years in Paris.

Everything at Madame Charlotte's happened in my immediate vicinity. I breakfasted there first thing in the morning as she heated up the milk and the coffee, after which she and the servant—always a French girl—cleaned up. The cellar was seen to by her son Louis in his long, blue apron. By eleven o'clock the place would begin to fill up with a crowd of hungry people and it stayed full until late at night. Madame Charlotte's was a centre of student life and the whole street was frequented entirely by students. Directly opposite the entrance to the crémerie was the

Académie Colarossi; other art schools were nearby and customers were continually coming and going. It was a unique hotchpotch of nationalities. Sitting next to each other in loyal friendship were Britons, Swedes, Finns, Russians, Bulgarians, Germans from Germany and Germans from Austria, Italians and Spaniards, Poles and Hungarians, Americans and Frenchmen. Each spoke his own language or in French picked up from Madame Charlotte complete with Alsatian accent. All these people sat at the marble tables and when there was a shortage of room, Madame Charlotte had to sacrifice part of her kitchen and they would squash up in the corner among the sink, kitchen range and pots. Naturally, under such circumstances, the walls were soon covered with pictures painted out of 'gratitude'. We were like one big family, with the good mother worrying about her children. Sometimes we would all go off to an exhibition or make a trip to Versailles; Madame Charlotte would pack up a basket full of food, leading us like a clucking hen and we would swarm around her like chickens—somewhat overgrown chickens.

I have heard about Madame Charlotte ever since my earliest childhood. She has become a legendary figure for me like Father's cook, Louise, or Madame Morière, the owner of a small antique shop into whose care he entrusted his studio with all its curiosities and who systematically plundered him with the skill of an expert. Gradually, as Madame Charlotte's name came up in connection with so many famous artists, she has moved from my private domain into history where her *crémerie* will remain a grateful memory, like the shop of père Tanguy or the Bateau Lavoir.

Slewinski's promise to bring Father among old friends was no idle one. Among the regular customers was Sérusier who was sometimes accompanied by the rest of the Nabis from the Académie Julian. Thanks to Slewinski, a number of former Munich students, particularly Poles, formed the largest groups. Besides Wispiansky (1869–

1907), who was to become a star of the Polish theatre, there were Makovský, Podkovinsky, Mehoffer, de Lavaux, Zenon and Przesmycky. The Hungarians, who then had in Paris their famed painter Munkacsy (1844–1901), were quite strongly represented, though Father mentioned only Schwertner, Sandor and Kadar.

Living as he did in the house itself, Father became a sort of patron to a continually changing crowd; it was he and Slewinski who usually took charge of new arrivals and introduced them to the others. At the entrance to the *crémerie* stood two resplendent boards for the greater glory of the establishment, the one with a floral theme painted by Slewinski and the other of fruit by Mucha.

The move to a new environment opened up other opportunities of earning a livelihood. All Madame Charlotte's customers were equally hard up, but if any of them discovered a new source of income he would share it with his companions. One day Ruf, a wood-cutter, introduced my father to Ginisty, subsequently manager of the Odeon Theatre who was at that time editing a small and little-known publication called *La Vie Populaire.*

He proposed that I should do a drawing for the cover. The forty francs I received was a great help. Each week I waited anxiously for Saturday when I brought the editor a new drawing on box wood, all ready for cutting and collected a further fee. But at least half the money went on models and similar expenses. Only the wood itself was free. Meanwhile I continued working at the illustration for *The Adamites.* I intended first to design the whole series on a much larger scale and then reduce it to the required size, but when I started I realized it would take me a year or more to work out all the necessary details. I could not venture on such a vast undertaking without knowing how I was going to keep myself, since the question of the fee had not been discussed at all. I therefore made some sketches—this was in

1889, just as the World Exhibition was opening and guns were roaring during the mock storming of the Bastille—and sent them off to Prague for approval. However, the publisher could not wait and my unfinished drawings were sent straight to the printers. Consequently they turned out none too well, but by the time the book came out I had been able to produce a few better works. The publisher, Jouvet, had come to hear of me and asked if I would illustrate a book of fairy-tales by Xavier Marmier, *Les Contes des Grandes Mères*. When it was done, he sent some of the drawings to be displayed in the Salon. This was something beyond my wildest dreams and I was even more surprised when I arrived at the exhibition and found a notice under my pictures saying 'Mention Honorable'. Everybody at Madame Charlotte's congratulated me, and Louis fetched several bottles of wine from the cellar to end the memorable evening with appropriate ceremony.

By now, various new members had joined our circle. There was Durrio, a Spaniard who cut jewellery and experimented at firing pieces of terracotta in a kiln. A very small person, but infinitely kind, he was never able to refuse a favour; consequently people were always coming to him to borrow money or be put up for the night. He used to tell us about his work, especially his jewel-cutting, and I learnt many things that were to come in useful in later years. Schwertner and Sandor taught me something about painting on glass. Thus in addition to being our eating place, Madame Charlotte's crémerie also served as a sort of private academy where everybody explained his work and tried to win over the others to his opinions.

The stuffy little place was, in fact, a breeding-ground for the modern style. Each would bring in some new experience, pass it on to others and thus impulses were spread, like ripples on a lake. Through Durrio, for instance, they carried as far as the new group forming at Montmartre, where he moved from Montparnasse and became one of Picasso's first points of contact in Paris. He let Picasso have his studio at the Bateau Lavoir and,

becoming even more good-natured as he grew older, gave practically all his earnings in support of the 'Picasso band'. He remained faithful to the trends originating from Madame Charlotte's and worshipped Gauguin, preferring to suffer hunger rather than part with the few Gauguin drawings he had brought with him from the rue de la Grande Chaumière. Towards the end of his life, however, he was compelled through poverty to sell even his Gauguins and died penniless in 1939, deserted by all whom he had helped throughout the years.

Camille Mauclaire, another member of the circle, became a prominent critic, advocating the new ideas which he himself had helped to create at the marble table in the corner of the dining-room. There were Englishmen —among them, Delius—adding to the fervour for the teachings of William Morris; and Americans, who would return home with the germ of the new art, like birds of passage carrying around mistletoe seeds. There were Russians, Scandinavians, Italians, students from Belgium, Holland and Germany—each a bearer of some part of the ideas discussed so enthusiastically until late into the night.

Here, no doubt, Father's mind was shaped. Thinking back on all that he tried to pass on to me when I was a small boy, I seem to recognize the ideas of his various companions of the time. They each developed in their own way but all of them wanted not only to paint but to construct and express a complete philosophical system. Father followed this principle throughout the whole period he dedicated to Art Nouveau. On the one hand, he disliked it being fashionable but took it far more seriously than many of the others. He believed that he could convey deeper significance through his ornamentation, colours and compositions—a significance exceeding by far the

actual purpose of the drawing. Like others who had their particular reasons for leaving Art Nouveau, he withdrew when the framework no longer seemed to meet his needs.

In 1886, the Symbolist Manifesto was proclaimed by Jean Moréas, an eccentric from Athens wearing a provocative moustache and the huge rosette of the Legion of Honour in the lapel of his tight-fitting frock-coat. Poetry was to become the bearer of noble ideas and feelings, transposed into aesthetic symbols, evoking in the reader a chain reaction of thoughts too subtle to be expressed directly. In other words, what had always been one particular quality of poetry was to become its conscious, principal programme.

The younger generation reacted spontaneously. Symbolism gave the green light to all the amorphous sentiments welling up in the young soul, from nostalgia to cynicism, from rapture to black, neurotic depression. No more any need to be precise, to analyse and define. Words, shapes, colours, perfumes, floating on the edge of consciousness, became esoteric symbols for the aesthetically initiated. The artist recited his emotions with his eyes fixed on heaven. 'I am not a symbolist, I am a decadent,' mumbled Verlaine petulantly, whenever he wandered into the Café Voltaire where the Symbolists held their endless meetings. His eyes were fixed on the paving of back alleys and murky desolate streets.

Moréas, who came to Paris with a substantial yearly income and was evidently a most talented poet, became for a number of years the prophet and poetic king of Paris, with appropriate touchiness and self-confidence. 'I have come to regenerate literature.' 'Nothing good has been written since Ronsard.' 'Ronsard and I.' He spent his time in the cafés where his faithful devotees would

listen to him reciting his poems; the waiters called him Maître and accepted his outrages with a smile. He would not venture outside the safety of his circle. In the cafés he wrote his articles and dictated his poems, in the cafés there was no risk of his finding himself alone. Only when every place was closed was he obliged to summon up his courage, go home and spend a few hours in his own depressing company.

Symbolism soon became rampant at Madame Charlotte's, and its influence had a different effect on painting than on poetry. Whereas words were dematerialized and their real meaning blurred, painting, after being depersonalized by the Impressionists, now reacquired qualities which the younger generation missed: form, a sense of purpose and meaning. 'The painter,' declared Vuillard, 'must bring into his visual perception his entire concept of the universe, and with the aid of this perception transmit the philosophy he has arrived at and the exact nuance of his love of Nature.'

Sérusier was at the time studying magic, had discovered theosophy, and was busily converting the others to the new faith. If Symbolism had not appeared on the scene, he would probably have invented it himself.

> The sole truth about the world [he declared], is to be found in the soul which is the key to the universe, a part of the only spirit that fills the universe. Man contains in himself all the laws of Nature, but Nature binds him to the earth and prevents him from rising up into the infinite realm of the spirit. We must turn away from Nature as a flame turns away from the wood which it devours.

In the light of such ideas, Impressionism was merely a play of colours, tantamount to sinning against the mission of the artist. Even Gauguin, who had a far more realistic

turn of mind, wrote of the Impressionists: 'Ils cherchèrent autour de l'œil, et non au centre mystérieux de la pensée.' Symbolism was a natural form of expression for the painters whose thoughts were immersed in mystical signs and images.

I could see in my father to what extent this mixture of theosophy, occultism and mysticism captivated its adherents, and yet Father never declared himself to be a Symbolist and would probably have been very surprised by such a classification. A message, inherent in a picture, was for him the only possible justification of art. The artist was here to spread Light, and once he understood that this was his mission, every means was good. His partiality for spiritual mysteries led him naturally into the company of such figures as Sâr Péladan and Eduard Schuré, whose book *Les Grands Initiés* had such a profound influence on Sérusier. Another author of the same type, who became his friend and adviser, was D. A. Courmes, who even dedicated to him his *Theosophical Questionnaire.* This booklet was full of remarkable passages:

> Question 27: Give a short outline of the origin of man. Answer: During the Fourth Round the human form was created by progressive elements originating on the Moon. (As we know, the Moon was not always a satellite of the Earth, but was its Mother. The creative human forms were the Moon Pytrids.) This was the first human generation with a shadowy body and life supplied by elements, likewise progressive, originating on the Sun. (We call them Lhasas.) The second generation was composed only of the above mentioned organisms but strengthened. In the third generation, the admixture of the Mental, also supplied by progressive elements, likewise of Sun origin but of a higher level, comes about for the first time. This is one of the most important points which secret teaching has given to the world.

Each Round progressively developed Seven Basic Generations and each Generation Seven Sub-Generations.

The third and fourth generation of our Round inhabited mainly the continents that have disappeared, commonly known as Lemuria and Atlantis . . .

Such revolutionary discoveries naturally eclipsed the invention of the dirigible airship, the automobile and the submarine. The empire of the Great Unknown was within reach, inhabited by Forces, Elements and Light, inspiring a chill of horror at the very idea of dwarfish human existence but at the same time offering the possibility of becoming a conscious part of the Infinite Universe. Far from undermining the mysteries inherent in every phenomenon, the new archaeological discoveries, advances in chemistry and geophysics actually strengthened them. It was as though the human spirit was endeavouring, by a final leap into the barbed wire of irrationality, to escape the inevitable and merciless light of the twentieth century.

9

At the beginning of 1891, a new boarder appeared at Madame Charlotte's.

> He came and sat at our table, between Slewinski and me [Mucha relates]. He was a powerfully-built Breton, dressed in something that looked like a national costume. On his head he wore an astrakhan cap and across his shoulders a wide cloak with ornamental clasps. Madame Charlotte introduced him as a sailor who was also a painter: Monsieur Gauguin. We soon became friendly and he introduced us to a small, hunch-backed Dutchman called Meij de Haan, who communicated with us in the easily understood language of two still lifes painted by himself. From now on, Gauguin came every day. He was an excellent raconteur of sea stories, and knew how to hold his audiences with his powerful voice. He also spoke about art with great understanding. He explained to us his attitude to Nature, described the beauties of the tropical islands and the type of people living there. He had with him some of his drawings and paintings, all of them remarkable, both for line and colour.

Gauguin had come to Paris from Brittany to collect what money he could find for his first journey to Tahiti, and de Haan, his hunch-backed admirer, had followed him from Le Pouldu. De Haan came of a rich family—his brothers owned a biscuit factory in Amsterdam—and paid bills for both. Gauguin even considered taking him to Tahiti, hoping that de Haan would pay for the journey. But de Haan's family in Holland clamped down on his income. Moreover, the two had quarrelled at Le Pouldu

over the daughter of M. Henry, the hotel-keeper. Gauguin was offended that she should give preference to the ugly, hunch-backed de Haan merely because he was a bachelor.

In February, de Haan brought another Dutchman to Madame Charlotte's—a twenty-two-year-old painter named Willibrod Verkade, who had just arrived in Paris and was to remain a fervent member of the Gauguin group. He became intimate with the other Nabis, attending their regular meetings at Ranson's studio and his painting was influenced to a great extent by Sérusier and his theosophical fantasies. In the spring the two men went together to Brittany where they encountered an even stronger attraction. One day, after attending mass in a small country church, Verkade decided to become a Catholic; the following year, 1892, he entered the Benedictine monastery at Beuron where Didier Lenz, known as Father Desiderius, was leading a group of painting monks. From Sérusier it was only a step to the ideas of this remarkable sculptor who rejected Gothic art and the Renaissance and found the only genuine revelation of beauty in the Ancient Egyptians and the early Greeks. Father Desiderius's aim was to create a new art based on a sacred system of aesthetic canons mathematically transcribing the Christian dogma whose final goal was the victory of the spirit over the flesh. After a year at Beuron, Verkade was sent to Prague to carry out his first great work in the Beuron style—the decoration of St Gabriel's Church at the newly-built monastery founded by Countess Gabriela Sweert-Špork.

The monastery was dissolved in 1919. Today the building houses the Post Office Museum and part of the telephone administration. The church, however, is still operating, although known only to a score of old ladies in

the unromantic district of Smíchov. Its dark pseudo-Romanesque construction is concealed behind the tall wall of the garden, long since overgrown with brambles and cluttered up with piles of junk and huge drums of telephone cables protruding from the tangle of elder bushes. Outside the servicing depot for delivery vans, a few steps lead up to a doorway behind which, instead of the anticipated storeroom for crates and wire, is something like an Egyptian tomb opened up after three thousand years. On the walls and vaulting of the apse, in old gold and mellow colours, glisten the severe hieratic figures of saints with girlish faces, and the wings of angels, pinion folded on pinion, form hypertrophic ornamental patterns. Frescoes cover the walls and recesses from the floor to the beams of the roof. There are the founders of the order, St Benedict and St Scholastica, the patron saints of Bohemia, Vojtěch, Václav and Ludmila—more exotic to the local eye than Japanese Madonnas—and on a pilaster near the sacristy a St John of Nepomuk on a blue-green background, the most fantastic Nepomuk his home town has ever seen. A wide girlish face edged with a Greek beard, the aristocratic hand motioning for silence, touching the charming lips with a playful finger, the robes a picturesque abstraction of Byzantine mosaics. It is Gauguin mixed with the Icons with a touch of Burne-Jones—or Fra Angelico, had he painted at the time of Art Nouveau. A more frivolous, more ascetic Fra Angelico.

I do not think Father ever visited Beuron, but deep down in his work there is a secret passage leading to the vaults of Father Desiderius's school. Verkade remained a Symbolist even in Prague, while Mucha in Paris was trying to become a monk.

By 1891, Gauguin was forty-three but, except for the

narrow circle of his painter friends, he was either unknown or an object of indignation and derision. Hardly had the general public learnt to accept Impressionism when Gauguin appeared with his startling colours and bizarre composition. Even painters like Renoir could not accept him. He was alone, and what influence he had on the younger painters was more in the sphere of artistic theory than in practice. The school, as it was called, at Pont Aven, where Sérusier, Filiger and Verkade lived with Gauguin, was merely a free association of antagonistic characters grouped around a strong personality. 'He maintained that he was a primitive, wanting to produce the art of primitive people. I had other tasks,' Father once said, for whom the purpose of a painting determined the choice of means. This purpose—or task, as he called it—had nothing in common either with Breton peasants or Tahitians. Father's whole way of thinking was based on his country's tradition which he wanted to develop further. In this Gauguin could offer him no assistance. In matters of technique they agreed—they both believed in composition, the symbolic importance of colours, and a firm line. The stained glass window, with its accentuated outlines enclosing a single colour and forming a two-dimensional picture, was for both a perfect example of simplified form, decorative and legible. Whether or not Father was directly influenced by Gauguin's 'cloisonisme' is difficult to say. It may well have been the unconscious impulse which helped him to clarify his own thoughts. Mucha probably valued Gauguin far more as a thinker than as a painter. It is not difficult to imagine the kind of reservations he must have had in regard to Gauguin's drawing and composition, but he was aware of his genius and was distressed by the lack of understanding shown by the public.

Actually, he did not think people understood Gauguin any better, later, when they started to pay staggering sums for his paintings.

In Mucha's eyes, however, Gauguin the artist was different from Gauguin the man. He was too noisy; he drank and was a troublemaker. 'They were wild savages,' he replied, not wishing to be drawn, when I tried one day to get more details of his relationship with the Gauguin crowd. Father was convinced that an artist did not have the right to waste his energy. Man had not been put on earth for his own amusement, and each failure to do his duty was to be paid for.

In the field of art they had much in common—even mutual respect for Puvis de Chavannes whose 'Poor Fisherman' was, to Gauguin, the first attempt at what he called *synthétisme*. Mucha admired his large canvases—his great weakness throughout his life. 'The true mission of painting,' said Puvis de Chavannes, 'is to enliven walls. Apart from that, pictures need not be bigger than the palm of the hand.' Everybody was prepared to agree with such an opinion. What Puvis de Chavannes said of his method of work might easily have been spoken by my father: 'I turn an idea over and over until it comes up clear before my eyes. Then I look for an action to express it exactly but at the same time a real action. This is symbolism, if you like, but symbolism that is as little arbitrary as possible.'

Today his greatest works are almost unknown. They adorn the museums at Amiens, Lyons, the Boston Library, the Panthéon and the Hôtel de Ville in Paris. In Mucha's day he was the centre of attention, and when, in 1894, canvases destined for the Hôtel de Ville were exhibited in the Salon de Champ-de-Mars, they created a sensation.

Some admired them, others attacked them savagely. We have become accustomed to lumping him together with the rest of the pompous academicians but this is an error based on ignorance. His pictures disclosed opportunities that merely waited to be grasped, and Gauguin was not deceived in seeing in him an ally. For Mucha he demonstrated one of the ways in which art could be put at the service of ideas. His great symbolic compositions communicated eternal truths with noble pathos, like a gospel read in the mystical twilight of a cathedral. This was a purpose worthy of an artist who viewed his talent as so much capital entrusted into his hands. Father made illustrations for cheap periodicals, dreaming of a future when destiny would make him speak from the walls of some Slav Panthéon to thousands of today's and tomorrow's citizens.

There was, however, another influence, less showy but strong enough to affect everyone, including Gauguin: the newly-discovered Japanese art which disturbed and captivated the artists with the impact of Negro sculpture on the post-war generation. Here was a parallel to what they themselves were seeking, ready-made and brought to perfection: brevity, symbolism, verity of line, and a decorative two-dimensional design. They first saw the Japanese close to and in considerable quantity at the World Exhibition in 1889. From that moment Japanese influence penetrated everywhere and hastened the development of the entire *fin de siècle.*

Elements of Japanese technique began to appear in Mucha's work at about the same time, but they cannot be linked with the World Exhibition. He visited it only once, at the opening, and never came back. He could not afford it. The whole question of influence is a tricky one. A

historian sees the part together with all that was going on at the same time, but were the contemporaries aware of these happenings? Probably not. An idea which seems original usually springs from two, three, ten heads at the same time, hundreds or thousands of miles apart. We take in nine-tenths of reality subconsciously, receiving ideas on the basis of chance associations. Delacroix saw Constable's 'Hay Wain' and repainted the sky in his 'Massacre at Chios', but such cases are rare. I know of almost no similar connection in my father's life. His style was born suddenly, overnight, ready-made without any previous development. Naturally it did not spring from his head like Athena. He would walk the streets, go to printing works and to the theatre, meet his contemporaries at Madame Charlotte's, visit exhibitions, but all this remained in the subconscious, unused, dormant. From his first day in Paris until Christmas 1894, there is no change in his work other than a growing skill and an increased tendency towards Symbolism. No pronounced Japanese influence is discernible until it became an integral part of the new style.

In April 1891, Gauguin arranged a sale of his thirty best paintings to pay for his journey to the Pacific. The results were pitiful: 9,860 francs. Seen off by a handful of friends at the gloomy Gare de Lyon, he departed for the islands where he hoped to find not only peace and happiness, but also fame. When he returned two years later, on 24 August 1893, he was worse off than before. Not even the few friends were there to welcome him. Nobody expected him, he had no money and nowhere to go. The only place he could think of was Madame Charlotte's *crémerie*.

Everybody who could, left Paris in the summer. The

rue de la Grande Chaumière was deserted. Only Mucha was working his usual fourteen hours a day, smoking endless cigarettes and eating in the empty *crémerie*. There Gauguin found him—the only face he knew.

Very little has come down to us of their friendship. No letters, almost no records of their conversation. Father was not historically minded. They met daily, Gauguin speaking nostalgically of the islands, vexed that he had ever left. He had a problem: Durand-Ruel was preparing his exhibition and although Gauguin had big hopes for it he seemed reluctant. Father said he started arguing that nobody would understand his pictures, that they were no good for showing and everything considered, he would not exhibit. After more such declarations, his objections had become clearer:

> He walked about the room and worked himself up into a helpless rage: 'I would have to do something to them. I can't let people see the pictures as they are.' He paused. 'Even if I wanted to, I couldn't do anything. I haven't got a studio.' 'That's no problem,' I said, 'I've got a studio across the road, there's plenty of room for both; we'll get everything moved over and you can stop worrying.' We had all his pictures brought to my studio, and from that day on each of us worked in his own corner. Gauguin was not too happy. I saw and heard how he fretted. Once, completely exasperated, he kicked the picture from the easel and exploded: '*Merde*! I wish at least I could draw!'
>
> I felt very sorry for him, knowing what he wanted. I also knew what the organizer of the exhibition wanted—money. And what the public wanted. The exhibition was held in November, but none of them got what they expected. It was only much later that his works became the object of speculation, even though still uncomprehended. Madame Charlotte, too, had some Gauguins, one of them a particularly beautiful painting, but I am sure that the poor thing never understood it either.

She might not have understood, but she lent Gauguin

money to carry him over the first months until he moved in December to No. 6, rue Vercingétorix. Father had also moved. He was no longer at No. 13, above the *crémerie*, but opposite, at No. 8, and Gauguin found, conveniently, a small room in the same building, where he lodged for as long as he was using Father's studio. This new studio, which was much bigger, had originally belonged to an etcher named Kadar who bequeathed it to Father when he left the rue de la Grande Chaumière. Father was now becoming known as an illustrator, and his worst days were over. With the first money he could spare he adorned the new studio with an item for which he had been longing for many years. A harmonium. It was a big, dark instrument with a good tone and a large number of stops. He could not play it but he soon learned and from then on he spent an hour every evening improvising church music and old Christmas carols. His harmonium accompanied him wherever he moved, until it arrived at our home in Prague where it stands today. When I was small and had to stand on tiptoe to see the keyboard, I used to come and watch him play or listen, crouching in a corner, until it got completely dark in the room. I saw his hands groping over the keys as if moving from memory to memory, there being a peculiar, incommunicable sadness in what he played. Nightfall, I could no longer see him, only hear the rustling of fingers on the keyboard and the tones gliding in grave modulations from key to key.

In Gauguin's time, the harmonium was the first curiosity in the studio which was to fill up with all sorts of peculiar objects, a curiosity even more striking since its owner did not know how to play it. Gauguin probably did not know either, but he let himself be photographed playing it, in a striking négligé, by my father who had just

bought yet another favourite toy—a camera. Taking photos became a passion with him, although he remained the world's worst photographer. Like other painters of the time, he used to photograph all his models and finish the details, mainly the drapings, from the pictures. Comparing photographs of models used by Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, Renoir or Mucha, it is quite remarkable how each picture shows unmistakably its origin, a completely different style, the technique of the artist, his emphasis on colour or line, his decorative or realistic approach. Their pictures, taken with primitive cameras, are inimitable and unmistakable like their sketches. Father took photographs throughout his life and as soon as I could stand, even I had to pose before the camera. It was a long and tiresome procedure before I was contorted into the appropriate position and Father, with the solemn dedication of a scientist firing a space-rocket, pressed the lever. My arms, legs and neck ached but I could think, and I regularly thought only of one thing. Ever since I had first held a pencil, Father had given me lessons in drawing—lessons that were a sheer waste of time. One of his favourite precepts he impressed upon me was: the figure in a composition must always be in a restful, non-strenuous position. An unnatural, exhausting posture transmits to the spectator a feeling of fatigue and distracts him. Whenever I sat as a model, with hands wrenched and head twisted so that my whole body ached for half the next day, I would try in vain to square up that precept with my painfully exhausting condition. I never asked him for an explanation. A difference in age of nearly sixty years between father and son does not constitute fertile ground for discussion.

The poor, insignificant painter whom Gauguin had known at Madame Charlotte's in 1891 was safely on the way to success when they met again two years later. He still drew his main income from illustrations for Armand Colin, but he had started on his first lithographs: an 1892 calendar published by Messrs Lorilleux which consisted of twelve circular representations of children playing with the symbols of the zodiac and twelve figural, richly-decorated frames for the text. He received 2,500 francs and a considerable amount of publicity, as Lorilleux was an important paint manufacturer and the calendar went to painters, art schools, theatres and periodicals. There was, however, nothing striking about the whole work. The technique was traditional, using Renaissance motifs and a profusion of allegorical figures. He might have done it in Vienna as a homage to Makart, or in Munich under the guidance of his venerable professors. Perhaps it is only in the meticulous execution and quality of the drawing that Mucha's calendar differs from the standard work of the time. Not a single detail, even in the lettering, betrays the new ideas he had by now fully accepted: no more copying classical styles, art must be an integral part of life and create its own decorative vocabulary from the study of Nature. All this was familiar to him and yet he never applied any of these precepts. Fearing that the customer might reject a modernistic design? Did he think Lorilleux would have been startled by plants, curves and flowing hair? Not at all. Father just never thought of it. Everything he drew for money was merely craftsmanship as he had learnt it at the art school. An illustrator working for periodicals used to put less personality into drawings than present-day photographers. His business was to illustrate or to adorn a page with acanthus leaves. That was all he

was paid for and all he had time for. Until the day when the photograph found its home in the newspaper, the draughtsmen had to churn out hundreds of pictures daily which anyway came out mutilated by the engravers.

Most illustrators were satisfied to draw what they were asked for and go off to a café. Father, however, was caught up in the mesh of his conscientiousness. Doing illustrations he wanted to learn, so as to compensate for the sudden break in his studies; it was a matter of honour not to hand in any work before he was satisfied with it. He gradually acquired the reputation of an honest illustrator but, instead of working a few hours, he slaved away from early morning till late at night, making dozens of studies from life and devoting more time to one picture than the author had to the entire story which it accompanied. As the cost of models would have ruined him, he drew and photographed all his friends and visitors, making them pose with raised sword, kneel with clasped hands, or lie in death throes on the couch. His drawings constituted a real gallery of the inhabitants of the rue de la Grande Chaumière and Madame Charlotte's *crémerie*. Naturally the most frequent posers were his Czech painter friends, including Kupka, who went over to the Montmartre Modernists, Bílek, the religious sculptor, Marold, Vácha and Dědina. Even Gauguin sat as model, wrapped in a barber's sheet as the village lad Absalon for a story in the *Petit Français Illustré*. Then there was Bibi la Purée—his real name was André Joseph Salis de Saglie—alcoholic, shoe-black and friend of Verlaine. Bibi used to go around in an artistic broad-brimmed hat and a very dirty shirt which he refused to have washed, claiming it was one of Verlaine's and the poet's memory would be tarnished in the laundry. Verlaine had indeed spent many nights

drinking with him and had even inscribed one of his poems: 'A Bibi la Purée, type épatant et drôle tant.' Moreover, on one particularly wild night with d'Orival, Vicaire, Tabouret and two ladies he had given him the nickname Bibi, derived from L'Arbi (soldier), as André Salis had just returned from military service with the *zouaves* in Algeria. Now he went the round of pubs and studios in Montparnasse and Montmartre, pumped his friends for money and unerringly paved his way to a dubious immortality. His drinking companion Verlaine was then just alive, swaying through the streets of the Quartier Latin like a giant Silenus in a flowing greatcoat, a pathetic wreck, living on the thin ice of his reputation, honoured and suffered by his shocked admirers. It is said that Father once met him, drenched and helpless, in a dark alley near the Invalides. He brought him home, thinking he might use the old bearded man as a model and only then recognized Verlaine. He hung up his great-coat near the stove and started his portrait, later known as 'Verlaine terrassé par le Chevalier Malheur'.

I am not sure about the first part of the story. Verlaine may have been brought along by one of the friends, or more likely, Father picked him up at the Café Vachette where Moréas had settled in with his Symbolists. This was a new and very expensive establishment on the corner of the Boulevard St Michel and the rue des Ecoles, owned by the writer, Chavette, who made it a celebrated literary centre of the late 'nineties. Regular customers were du Plessis, la Tailhède, Hugues Rebell, E. Raynaud, Philip Berthelot, Maurras, Pierre Louÿs, Paul Sonday, Maurice Barrès and, of course, Moréas, who proudly declared that he arrived at eight a.m. and left at five the following morning. Verlaine, who disliked posh places, staggered in

only if his pub-crawling happened to bring him near the Boulevard St Michel. 'Miserable!' sighed Father when I asked him about Verlaine. 'He was a poor and miserable man.' That was all. Once, when I asked him about Carrière, he was even more laconic: 'Yes, Carrière . . .' and shook his head thoughtfully. Yet he admired his portraits, shrouded in their warm, dark brown veil of mourning. They had much in common. Painting was the vehicle for their philosophy, each picture a debate with their own anxieties. There was in both of them the same basic sadness, although Father found Carrière's mysticism too resigned. 'L'homme supérieur,' declared Carrière, 'est celui qui a reconnu le néant et la nullité de toutes choses et de toute la vie et qui néanmoins remplit sa tâche à la place où il a été mis avec conscience et avec toutes les forces.' Father could agree only with the second half of the sentence. He dressed his figures in light instead of in mourning crêpe. 'Even in the greatest suffering,' he maintained, 'there is some glimmer of hope', whereas Carrière objected: 'Suffering and pain are themselves a form of hope—the form of expression of each new future, each new life.' Carrière's work with its melancholy message was an embarrassing subject and was gradually passed over with tactful silence. The old gentleman of the old school. When Charles Morice asked for his definition of an ideal work of art, Carrière replied: 'A white blotch, where there would be everything.'

The reaction of the 'nineties to Impressionism has caused the period to appear as a sort of manneristic hurdle which art had to clear in the race for modern forms. Its tendencies have been censoriously styled literary, as though the standard of art was automatically lowered the moment it conveyed a coherent idea. This seems rather

unjust, since most modern styles first asked 'What?' and only then 'How?' In fact, they were doing the same as Symbolism, only differently. In the 'nineties all that was to follow already existed in a rudimentary form in the minds of individual artists but, like the seeds of certain plants, could only germinate after having been frozen by the tragedy of the following century. The First World War left the people tense and full of doubt, no longer satisfied with mere anatomy of reality and ivory towers. The artist, co-inhabitant of the disembowelled ant-hill, writhed like a grub in the cold light of day. This was, after all, what the Symbolists had in mind, except that they were marching towards the future in the opposite direction. 'For me,' Zola remarked one day to Mallarmé, 'everything has the same value, shit as much as diamonds.' 'Yes,' agreed Mallarmé gently, 'but diamonds are nevertheless more rare.'

10

In 1892, the year when he did the Lorilleux calendar, there was a considerable improvement in Father's circumstances. Although he was getting plenty of orders since he first began working for *Le Petit Français Illustré* and *La Vie Populaire*, they were all very second-rate assignments. He made drawings for the *Figaro Illustré*, *Illustration* and *Revue Mame*; and his loyal friend Kadar got him a quasi-permanent job with the *Costume au Théâtre*. This magazine contained nothing but reproductions of stage sets and costumes from new productions in opera and the theatre. He only had to copy what had already been done. It was in fact a stage-photographer's job, but it brought him a fee and free tickets to plays. And he met Steinlen who designed the coloured cover for the issues with a daring Art Nouveau motif of stylized flowers. In this new climate Mucha could not remain unaffected. He produced a design for lottery tickets—Bons de la Concorde—where, perhaps for the first and last time before January 1895, there is a hint of his future style, disguised in a mass of pseudo-Renaissance details: an arch like a halo framing the figural group, where the female figure particularly has the typical realistic and yet stylized quality of his later draped Art Nouveau women. After this promising start, however, his interest was deflected in another direction. Armand Colin offered him an assignment which represented the first acknowledgement of his talent as a

draughtsman and placed him on a level with the most distinguished illustrators. The plan was to publish in instalments a literary version of Germany's history by Seignobos, illustrated half by the famous Rochegrosse and half by Mucha.

The offer put Father, who was so intensely patriotic, into quite an embarrassing dilemma. Was he to present himself for the first time to the public in connection with the German nation? He worried over it for several days till he found a solution. He was no chauvinist. He recognized the qualities of other nations, all he wanted was a fair share for his own country. The Germans claimed that there was no such thing as an independent Slav culture in central Europe. This was not true, and it hurt him and made him want constantly to prove the contrary. After pondering over the offer for some days he finally signed, accepting an undertaking that was to occupy him until 1898, and plunged into the painstaking work of historical preparation. His plan was simple: he would illustrate such moments in German history when the Czechs had played a decisive part or even influenced the whole of Europe's destiny. From the earliest period he chose scenes which summed up the German spirit, such as Arminius's victory over the Romans, Julian's defeat of the Alemanni, and the death of Barbarossa.

Here at last was a job which was not purely a matter of technique, and Mucha decided to make the best of his opportunity. The large black and white pictures that were to be engraved by Lemoine became gradually less and less descriptive, resembling Wagnerian visions or scenes from an Eisenstein film. In the 'Death of Barbarossa' the naked corpse has been relegated to the background, while the centre is occupied by the dark silhouette of a hooded

monk towering over the dead king. In the foreground an ominous tangle of roots rears out of the swamp.

'When I was engaged on Barbarossa,' said Mucha many years later, 'Marold was ill in bed. He had knotted intestines. I went to visit him and drew those knotted roots sitting at his bedside.' 'Telles œuvres,' wrote the critic Ivanhoe Rambosson in *La Plume*, 'nous étonnent par la hauteur de vues de l'artiste qui vit dans un monde supérieur au nôtre et froid pour nous.'

Mucha did not have proper apparatus for the immense task of illustrating Seignobos's history. 'I started the work while I was living in the little room above Madame Charlotte's. My friends came and posed for me and we were packed in there like sardines.' Dozens of different poses were needed and the camera worked continuously, an ingenious device permitting Mucha to operate it and pose at the same time. The effects were sometimes Dadaistic. In one photograph the body of a decapitated nobleman bleeds at the block, and the executioner, represented by Dědina, ties a severed head (Father's) to a post by the hair. Another time Mucha posed as Jean de Leyde in the square at Ghent beheading one of his wives with a sovereign's proud gesture. This scene evidently gave him malicious satisfaction—presumably even then his attitude to women wavered between unqualified adoration and sceptical animosity.

One of the models in the Dadaist execution photograph was Ženíšek, the Bibi la Purée of the Czech painters' colony.

> Ženíšek came to visit me one day and has remained ever since. He maintained that he was an actor. Maybe he did once act with some village troupe. Some said he was a bookbinder, others a house painter. He certainly knew all about painting and acted as

a useful factotum for us. 'I'm not afraid of work,' he would say. 'I sleep beside it.' Once he had begun he worked like a horse, but it gave him the most fearful thirst. We had an awful lot of trouble with him. After he had posed for me for a while and done a bit of knocking together or backing canvases, his work began to flag, and I would ask Vácha if he didn't need Ženíšek. When Vácha could stick him no longer he would send him on to Marold, until once again I would be asked if I didn't need Ženíšek. One day he came back to me from Marold. Before he had got his coat off, he told me delightedly that a distinguished doctor at the restaurant at Palais Royal had prescribed a new medicine for him that was guaranteed to cure every illness. He, Ženíšek, had been taking it for a fortnight and had put on six pounds. Naturally I wanted to know what this miraculous prescription was. 'Listen carefully,' he said. 'As soon as you feel there's something wrong with you, go along at once to Makovský at Palais Royal and drink a couple of pints of Pilsen.' I thanked him for the advice and sent him to continue the cure at Vácha's. I did not see him for some time until he returned all dressed up. 'What's up, Ženíšek, why all this finery?' I asked. 'I've got a part at the Folies Bergères. I'd like to invite you to the show.' I looked at him standing there, small and tubby, staring at me with goggling eyes. 'You're on the stage?' 'Oh yes, please do come. I want to know what you think of me.' There was no getting out of it, I had to promise. The following week I went along to see him. The stage was full of dancing girls, all glitter and ostrich feathers—but no Ženíšek. After a while I spotted him. He was the frog, dressed entirely in green oil-cloth, with flippers on his hands and feet, crawling around the stage and rolling his frog's eyes. Occasionally, so that I should see he had a speaking part too, he let out a loud, sad croak.

Father's first successes brought new visitors to the little room above Madame Charlotte's. Like Slewinski in the past, former fellow-pupils at the Académie Julian and the Académie Colarossi called on him with their drawings to ask his advice. He did not merely correct what they had done, but he had the knack of being able to demonstrate

and clarify the complex principles of technique. To help them further he gave them homework and corrected it next day. Soon the chance visitors began to call regularly, bringing their work and their friends. Father was never able to refuse anybody; he corrected and explained until he had dangerously little time left for his own work. There was no alternative but to arrange set hours, and before he realized what was happening, he was running a well-attended class for composition and drawing. As the pupils were all his former classmates, it did not occur to him to ask a fee. Only later, when it was evident that his room was not big enough and he would have to hire a proper studio for teaching, he decided, reluctantly, to charge them a small amount to cover expenses. In this studio, lent by Colarossi, the first Cours Mucha was held, and teaching became an important part of his work. His students as much as his posters popularized his style abroad, especially in America. From the first, the bulk of them came from the United States and it was perhaps due to them that he and Whistler eventually met as teachers at the so-called Académie Carmen.

In 1893, Father was a popular figure in the neighbourhood of the rue de la Grande Chaumière. He had golden-brown hair, sparkling eyes, a short beard clipped to a point, and he still wore the red shirt Widhopf had given him. Unlike the Russians, however, he tucked it in his trousers, and used a wide sash in place of a belt. He grew so used to his costume that he was quite unaware of the exotic impression it made. He and Gauguin, who after his return from Tahiti wore a long blue coat, flowered waistcoat and grey hat with a blue ribbon, must have made a delightful pair on the streets.

Mucha further distinguished himself in the eyes of the

Quartier Latin by his part in the establishment of an institution which in its seventy years has become notorious: the Bal des Quat'z Arts. The various guilds in Paris had for centuries celebrated the Carnival in their own ways, and only the artists had no organized festivity of their own. The students of the Ecole des Beaux Arts were determined not to allow this state of affairs to continue. They called a public meeting, invited the inhabitants of the Quartier Latin and Montmartre, and put forward their proposals. Naturally that inveterate organizer, Alphonse Mucha, was immediately involved, haranguing, pleading, giving advice until it was unanimously decided that members of the four artistic guilds—painting, sculpture, architecture and literature—would hold an annual ball, to be arranged by a committee of representatives from the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Quartier Latin, and 'guests'.

> We held the ball at the Moulin Rouge in Montmartre. The interest it aroused was enormous. Crowds of masks poured into the hall from 10 p.m., and at midnight all the doors were locked and not opened again until eight o'clock in the morning when the masks surged out into the streets and made their way home as people were hurrying to work. The big attraction was always the floats; this time the theme was Cleopatra's court. On a platform borne by Egyptian slaves Cleopatra lay surrounded by a group of girls forming a beautiful *tableau vivant*. They were all models whose bodies we knew by heart so that their clothing, or rather lack of it, was of very little importance. But a certain senator, M. Béranger—Père-la-Pudeur, as we called him—took it into his head that the public had been scandalized by these naked models from the Bal des Quat'z Arts and put the whole ball committee into the dock.

The event had dramatic repercussions. The court produced witnesses to testify that what went on at the Moulin Rouge was a menace to public morals. The key witness

for the prosecution was La Goulue, who declared that she was morally outraged and unleashed a torrent of indignation against the depravity of youth. Thanks to her testimony the court was able to pronounce a severe sentence. The students of the Ecole des Beaux Arts and the models who, poor things, were quite blameless, had each to pay a fine of one hundred francs, a catastrophic inroad into their budget for the forthcoming holiday months. On 2 July 1893, students of the Ecole des Beaux Arts organized a demonstration of protest. The young people of the Quartier Latin joined in, and further demonstrations were held on the 3rd and 4th of July. Dupuy, Minister of the Interior, lost his nerve. Strong detachments of police were ordered out against the demonstrators, skirmishes developed and soon the entire Quartier Latin was up in arms. Buses were overturned and set on fire, barricades erected, shops looted. The fiercest battle was fought on the corner of the Boulevard St Michel and the Place de la Sorbonne. A heavy metal object hurled from the pavement hit a twenty-year-old student, Antonin Nuger, on the terrace of the Café d'Harcourt, and killed him on the spot.

The tetchiness of the Minister of the Interior, who may be blamed for the disturbance, was not merely the result of indigestion. For two years anarchists had been putting their doctrine into practice with a wave of assassinations, and his nerves had suffered badly. Although he had behaved bravely when Vaillant threw a bomb at him in the Palais Bourbon, ducking just in time and then, amidst the débris of the explosion, standing up and declaring: 'Right, gentlemen, let's get on with the meeting!'—nevertheless he did not have the composure of a true statesman. Public opinion alternately accused the police of conspiracy with the anarchists and of supineness. Bombs exploded in the

rue St Martin, at the Madeleine, in the elegant Foyot's Restaurant, and the dramatic climax came on 24 June of the following year, when Caserio murdered President Carnot at Lyons to avenge his executed comrades, Henry and Vaillant. As usual the police made up for their failures by taking it out on those who were within reach.

It is quite possible that with so much to worry about the prefecture had become interested in the Bal des Quat'z Arts even before it took place. Father's bright idea in selecting his costume certainly did not help matters. He dressed up as General Boulanger and rode across Paris standing in a carriage, red paint dripping down his face from a gash on the temple. The crowds in the streets grew riotous, falling in behind the carriage and singing seditious Boulangist songs.

A mere two years had elapsed since the rise and fall of the gallant dictator who might well have achieved his ends if his entire career had not been like an operetta, with bedroom episodes taking his mind off tough reality. While he was basking in the adulation of the crowds, mounted on his black charger, his enemies were busy collecting compromising material and in April 1889, the Minister of the Interior signed a warrant for his arrest.

The dashing General had never intended things to go so far. A game is a game, but it must not become an obstacle to love. Instead of proudly awaiting his destiny, he hung his dictatorial aspirations on a nail and fled to Brussels with Madame de Bonnemain. Destiny, however, once it has blinded its victim, usually finishes the job. Shortly after their ignominious flight, Madame de Bonnemain died, and her unhappy lover, having sacrificed his power for love, shot himself through the temple over her grave.

To ride along the boulevards dressed as General Boulanger, complete with bleeding head, was a fitting addendum to the anarchists' bombs. Father, incredibly naïve in political matters and blissfully unaware of the import of his surrealist joke, attributed the demonstrations to the Parisians' sense of humour. Some thirty-five years later Salvador Dali unintentionally did almost the same thing and won no less popularity. At a time when the entire world was horror-struck by the kidnapping and murder of the Lindbergh baby, Dali arrived at a masked ball—so, at least, it was alleged in Paris—dressed up as a child with blood gushing from his temples. These two cases were often cited when comparing the climate of the Surrealist and Art Nouveau movements. Dali told me he had no idea what all the fuss was about. 'At the time of the Surrealist ball in New York I did not know what happened to the Lindbergh baby. I simply thought up a mask with a dead child on my head. In Paris naturally they made up a story about me going as the Lindbergh baby, but it was just a lot of rubbish.'

The Bal des Quat'z Arts, with its popularity assured by the riots at its inception, has been held in April ever since. The midnight scenes with floats and nude models continued, once representing the builders of Notre Dame, another time the Stone Age or Sardanapalus's Court, and some years later the grand procession even displayed replicas of Father's best-known posters and decorative panneaux. La Goulue, for having behaved so shamefully before the court, sank into well-merited degradation. She drank, became obese, her dancing turned into a nightmare of quivering flesh, until that once 'exotic animal, caught in the lasso of her own rhythm', as Heuzé put it, was a painful caricature of her own image. Having drunk her

way through her carriage and her house, she appeared for some time in a travelling circus with an old moulting lion, but not even Lautrec who decorated her booth with paintings was able to keep her show going. The booth was sold, the paintings cut up and only after many years of passing from hand to hand for fantastic sums were they reassembled again and found a permanent resting place in the Musée du Jeu de Paume.

In 1928, when I was a very small boy, Father took me to Paris and walking with me through the streets pointed out some of the remaining legendary figures of his time. 'That is La Goulue,' he said one day. I saw an old woman selling paper flowers at the entrance to Moulin Rouge. The following year she died a beggar in the poorhouse.

At the time of Gauguin's exhibition at Durand-Ruel's, a small and rather ugly half-caste girl of about fourteen called Anna la Javannaise appeared at my father's studio. Officially she was Gauguin's model. He dressed her in fancy oriental clothes, made her serve drinks at the rue Vercingétorix, and once even painted her.

According to Vollard, an opera singer named Nina Pack was responsible for her arrival in Paris. She evidently once told a rich friend who traded in the East that she wanted a black girl and a few months later the police found the little negress wandering in the Paris streets with a label round her neck marked: 'Nina Pack, Rue de la Rochefoucauld, Paris.' They brought her over. Nina Pack put her up in the servant's room and started calling her Anna. In a couple of weeks she realized that Anna was neither a toy nor a monkey, nor even a useful servant. Merely a human being that sat, stared and was cumbersome.

Disillusioned, she sent Anna to Vollard and asked him

to do something about her. Vollard decided she might do for Gauguin as a model.

Gauguin, who claimed to be descended from the Incas, had a weakness for dark-coloured women. Although Anna was not pretty, she was at least very young, and brought back to Gauguin some of the atmosphere of the South Seas. She kept house for him at the studio with its chrome yellow walls, Tahitian pictures and weird exotic objects. In Paris everything went well, but he was to suffer a rude awakening when he took Anna to Brittany. The peasants believed she was a witch, threatening her wherever she went, until one day they attacked and would have killed her, had not Gauguin, mad with rage, intervened. In this skirmish a sailor kicked his ankle so viciously that he fell and had to be carried off to the house of Slewinski, who now lived most of the time in Brittany. Gauguin stayed in bed for a while, and though he eventually got back on to his feet the wound never stopped troubling him till the end of his life.

Anna could clearly no longer remain in Brittany, and she went back to Paris with the key of the studio. This time she cleaned up the place thoroughly. She sold everything that had any value, leaving of course the pictures, and disappeared.

11

THE year 1894 was ending with a dreary, cold Christmas week. Icy rain and sleet swept the deserted streets, cab-drivers tugged morosely at the reins of their wet horses and the hems of ladies' skirts were spattered with mud. The students from Colarossi, the boarders at Madame Charlotte's and the transient inhabitants of the rue de la Grande Chaumière left for their holidays. Father had not been back to Moravia for quite a time. In the first year he had no money to go and now, when he might have afforded the journey, he had neither the time nor the motive. Too much had changed at Ivančice.

He remained in his Paris studio, with his harmonium, fireplace, easels, rolls of paper and pieces of medieval clothing hanging up on hooks. He drew illustrations for the History of Germany and, due to a kind of superstitious conservatism, he left the costumes, bought at the Flea Market, where the model had last taken them off. A helmet from the Thirty Years' War lay on the mantelpiece, in the corner stood a halberd, on the easel hung a black Moravian peasant's hat embroidered with coloured pearls and decorated with a long cock's feather. Gauguin had once taken it down to be photographed in it, then he had hung it up again and the hat remained for a further thirty years on the easel through all the moves from studio to studio.

These were the origins of a jungle that was gradually to

cover the walls and floor with a fantastic tangle of shapes. The studio's bizarre decoration was not the result of purposeful collecting or hopeless Bohemian untidiness. Things accumulated because Father had a weakness for them like some people have for stray dogs and cats; they could not just be used and then heartlessly thrown out into the cold. From every picture some intimate prop remained which, after serving as a model, had acquired a permanent home in his asylum of unnecessary things. The stuffed golden pheasant, the stag's antlers, the battered musket case, once used, remained in their small reservations, safe and sheltered until they were eaten by moths, gnawed by mice, or stolen.

In gratitude, the objects filled the studio with a kind of quiet, whispering life, as if many small birds were hopping about in many small cages. Visitors coming in from the rainy streets found themselves in the pleasant, cheerful atmosphere of a bird shop. 'Salamandre'—the latest invention in the field of iron stoves—was fiercely burning in the middle of the studio with a few grains of incense roasting on its glowing top and the monastic perfume mingled with the smoke of cigarettes, pipe tobacco and cigars. There was always tea for visitors who strolled in to chat, warm their hands, dry their socks, unwrap their snacks, borrow money, try the harmonium or browse over books on exorcism, magic signs, flowers, beetles and medieval costumes. The studio was a free café for all in search of company, advice, assistance, or merely a roof over their heads when it was raining. No wonder Father looked forward to Christmas in Paris. At least he would have a quiet week to himself.

Shortly before Christmas, Kadar came to Madame Charlotte's for lunch. He had moved to No. 123, rue de

Rennes, only a few minutes walk from the Chaumière, and remained faithful to his old group at the *crémerie*. 'I wonder if you could help me,' he asked Mucha. 'You know Lemercier, the printers. I did a rush job for Brazil with them, it's all finished, only the proofs remain to be done, and I'm off for Christmas. Could you drop in and go over it for me?' 'No problem,' replied Mucha, unaware that he was playing destiny's trump card.

Lemercier's printing shop was at the back of an old house, No. 57, rue de Seine. The offices were on the first floor, but the printing was done in a long and dimly-lit hall which was once a theatre. They printed leaflets, calendars, ornamental menus and posters designed by well-known artists like Gottlob, De Feur and Puvis de Chavannes. The manager of the printing works was a certain M. de Brunoff, who later founded the magazine *Comedia*; his son became famous as the creator of France's Mickey Mouse, the popular elephant Babar.

Mucha was quite at home at Lemercier's. He had done several small lithographic jobs for them, and when he arrived to finish off the work for South America, both Lemercier and de Brunoff knew him as an efficient and speedy draughtsman.

I had to go along on Christmas day early in the morning. Paris was not yet awake after the Réveillon, the streets were empty, only scavengers were shuffling about, sweeping up the trampled paper hats and dirty tangles of coloured streamers.

The lithographers' room was nice and warm, the stove was burning and two paraffin lamps hanging from the ceiling were casting a soft glow on a new stone laid out in the middle of the workshop. There it was waiting, but not for me. What a pity, I thought. I liked beginning on a new stone. It was the same feeling as in school when I opened up a clean exercise book.

I worked on the proofs the whole day and carried on next

morning. This was St Stephen's Day, when Marold and I had arranged to go along to Makovský's Restaurant at Port Royal to eat. The feast of St Stephen would be nothing without roast goose, and I was in a hurry to finish the job.

At two o'clock, when I was completing the last proof, de Brunoff came to me all hot and bothered. 'Mucha,' he said, 'I'm in trouble. Sarah Bernhardt has just phoned. She needs a poster for her play and she wants it up on the hoardings by New Year's Day.' He stood shuffling his feet for a moment, looking at me searchingly. 'Have you ever done anything like that before?' 'Well—no,' I replied. 'But I could try.' 'There's no time for trying,' he sighed. 'We'd have to get down to it straight away.' 'All right—let's get down to it.' 'It's not as simple as that,' de Brunoff thought for a moment. 'You know what? We'll go and see the play tonight and then you can tell me how you propose doing it.'

My hopes of the roast goose were fading away. 'What time shall we meet?' I reckoned I still might be able to fit in an hour. 'When you're ready here, go and change, it's white tie, you know, and come back for me. I'll have fixed everything up in the meantime.' What was I to do? I had no tails. I managed to hire a suitable tail-coat for ten francs, but as none of the trousers fitted, I decided to wear the ordinary black trousers I wore at home. At night all cows are black, I told myself. But that was not all. I'd have to have a top hat. So I went along with my problem to Vácha where I happened to find Krämer. He produced an opera hat, a very old one that must have dated back to the 'forties; it was like a battleship and on the big side for me. The springs were all twisted and it wobbled when I put it on, so that I had to steady it with a finger to keep it from falling over my eyes. In this attire I turned up in the wings at the Théâtre de la Renaissance, with a sketchbook and all the pencils I needed. They were playing *Gismonda* by Sardou. Sarah was sublime, especially in the bit where she goes to church on Easter Sunday to the sound of bells and Gregorian chant. I sketched her dress, the golden flowers in her hair, the wide sleeves and a palm leaf in her hand. All the time the top hat kept swaying on my head and, as soon as I started drawing, it fell over my eyes. This made things

very difficult because I couldn't see the paper. But I was afraid to take the hat off, as it was only lent and somebody might steal it. A few steps away stood two very elegant gentlemen, highly amused at my predicament. I must have aroused their sympathy because one of them came to me and said: 'Put your hat on the chair here; I'll guard it for you.' It was Sardou.

In the flush of work I had not recognized him, but we had already met. One day when I was still doing drawings for the *Costume au Théâtre*, the publisher Lévy offered me a major job. He wanted to publish a fat book of poems by Eugen Manuel, some sort of patriotic reading for small children, and I was to do the illustrations. For me this was a great opportunity. Something serious. I agreed and I did Pasteur taking saliva from the mouth of a mad dog, Jules Simon, Victor Hugo and also Sardou. We went to his apartment with Manuel. They chatted, and I drew Sardou as he talked. He was pleased with my work, and Manuel remarked to him: 'We mustn't lose sight of that chap. He'll do something in the world.'

Victorien Sardou (1831–1908), who was to become one of Father's close friends, was at the age of sixty-three the most fertile and popular French author of the day. He had begun his career with resounding failure; when his first play *La Taverne des Etudiants* hopelessly flopped at the Odéon in 1854, he would probably have died of typhoid in his wretched garret if a neighbour, Mlle de Brécourt, had not taken charge of him, nursing him back to health and leading him subsequently to the altar. She introduced him to the beautiful Mlle Déjazet (1798–1875), star of light comedy, who had just set up her own theatre company. Sardou wrote *Candide* and *M. Garat* for her, and became her lover. His wife died, and he became famous with *Les Pattes de Mouches*. During the Second Empire his popularity rose steadily. He knew how to give the public exactly what it wanted, comedy, drama, sentimental patriotism, and he made use of the dramatic effect of

crowd scenes half a century before Reinhardt and the Meiningen players. After the 1870 war his popularity increased still more with his political satires. *Rabagas* inflamed the whole of France, *Uncle Sam* was banned by the censor and *Thermidor* occasioned a passionate outburst by Clémenceau in the Senate—'La Révolution est un bloc,' he cried, with his hand on his heart, 'qu'il faut accepter tout entier.' In 1884, Sardou became Sarah Bernhardt's lover, wrote *Fédora* for her and with his historical plays achieved international success. On her American tour Bernhardt actually played them in one theatre while Fanny Davenport was playing them in another, and the public had the benefit of watching a dogged contest between the two actresses. *Gismonda*, which had its first night on 31 October 1894, had a sentimental Byzantine plot designed to give Sarah an opportunity of showing the full range of her magic personality. She did not fail: Father watched her with profound respect.

This was not—as is generally supposed—the first time Mucha had sketched Sarah. In 1890, he had drawn her in *Cléopatra* by Emile Moreau for *Costume au Théâtre*. But now he was not merely concerned with her costume. A more sensitive approach was required. By identifying himself with the impression she made on him, he had to present her as a whole. He had all the necessary background for this. The Byzantine setting of *Gismonda* was close to his heart since the tradition of the Eastern church still lingered in Moravia; the atmosphere of Byzantium and Gregorian chants had surrounded him from childhood. He did not have to feel his way into an alien style, but merely to translate into his own medium the impact of his emotion.

When the play ended, de Brunoff was waiting for me in the

foyer. 'Well?' he asked. 'Remarkable.' We had come out of the Théâtre de la Renaissance and I proposed we should go next door to a small café and talk things over. We sat down at a marble table and drank hot chocolate. 'This is how I would do it,' I said, took out a pencil and drew the poster on the fine white marble top. Later I was rather surprised to see that the final version differed only slightly from this original sketch. The patron carefully preserved the drawing on the marble top and sold it for good money to Lemercier. De Brunoff liked my idea, and the following day I started drawing it to the actual size. When I brought the finished work in colour, Lemercier was just going out. He had his fur coat on, and I was only able to show it to him as he stood in the doorway. De Brunoff was not there, having left for the New Year holiday. Lemercier was clearly disappointed. It wasn't at all the sort of work his firm produced, he said. Wasted labour! But as he was just leaving and couldn't stop, he added: 'Can't be helped; we'll send it to the theatre, and let them decide what they want.'

I stayed on in Paris all alone, waiting for the reply. On the twenty-eighth, the theatre sent word to say that Sarah was pleased with the sketch and I should get down to work. There was little time left, I decided to do the poster in two parts. First I drew the upper part on one stone, and while this was being printed, I drew the lower part on another stone. But even so, they took away the stone before it was absolutely ready; the lower part was only just rushed through, and this makes the poster seem slightly unbalanced. However, by the thirtieth of December, the whole poster had been printed and hung up to dry. That was when de Brunoff returned on a quick visit to Paris to see that all was well. 'How's the poster going?' was his first question. 'Finished! It's up!' Without another word he rushed off to look at it. He stopped, went pale, looked at me, then at the poster and again at me. I couldn't understand what was worrying him. 'Mais, mon Dieu!' he gasped finally. 'It's a shambles! Sarah will never accept it. Nobody does stuff like that.' The situation was most embarrassing. At that moment the telephone rang. It was the theatre to say that Sarah was getting impatient about the posters; the men were waiting to stick them on the hoardings. So the

wretched de Brunoff had them packed up and put in his carriage. Off he drove, thoroughly upset, without even saying good-bye. I felt terribly depressed; not so much for myself as for poor de Brunoff who was going to be disgraced on my account. I also regretted all the time and effort I had put in, and the wasted Christmas. I sat down in the printing works for quite a while, very gloomy, until I was awakened by the telephone ringing a second time. The theatre wanted me to come straightaway. 'Now I'm for it!' I thought to myself. But I went all the same. They brought me to Sarah in her dressing-room, and there I was face to face with her for the first time. But I immediately felt a clear, clean atmosphere, and this gave me hope. My poster was up on the wall, Sarah was standing in front of it, unable to tear her eyes away. When she saw me, she came and embraced me. In short, no disgrace, but success, great success. Only de Brunoff was quite unable to understand what had happened, but in the end he reconciled himself to it and told me he would be glad if I would do more posters for him. As for Sarah, she would not let me go. I worked six whole years with her, until she left for America in 1901. But even after that I sometimes worked with her as long as I was in Paris.

Early on the morning of 1 January 1895, the new poster was seen for the first time on the hoardings of Paris and caused a sensation. The long, narrow shape, with its nearly life-size figure only a few inches from the ground, had an unusually dramatic effect. Instead of claiming attention by shrill colours, it stood out with delicate, transparent shades of violet, pink, green, brown and gold. Brian Reade* points out that Mucha deliberately rejected the use of drastic colour effects; comparing the first sketch in oils with the poster as it finally appeared, he shows how all the vermilion which Mucha had originally used for the tympanum, the flowers and the embroidery on the dress

* Brian Reade: *Art Nouveau and Alphonse Mucha*, H.M. Stationery Office, London, 1963.

had disappeared. Red and vermilion were the commonest colours in the posters of the time, especially those by Chéret, and it was the very absence of these that created an entirely new impression. Jerôme Doucet, in the *Revue Illustrée*, wrote:

> This poster made all Paris familiar with Mucha's name from one day to the next . . . This poster, this white window, this mosaic on the wall, is a creation of the first order which has well deserved its triumph . . . It seemed . . . when Chéret was covering our walls with posters, each more beautiful than the last, that nobody would be able to exhibit alongside him in the Salon de la Rue. We feared that one day when the great and good Maître, tired of seeing bad imitations of his work . . . turned to decorative painting, we feared that our houses would be plunged into mourning, because neither Grasset's diplomas, nor the rare decorations of Toulouse-Lautrec, could have filled the void left by Chéret. But now—behold—another artist has come along, worthy to take his place and win the approval of the hurrying, choosy Parisians. Mucha has triumphed where success seemed impossible. It is the triumph of silk, gold and precious stones, it is wealth thrown open-handed on the dubious whiteness of our city's walls.

But there were other articles: 'Making a stop in Prague, Sarah the tragédienne, struck by the smooth originality of Mucha's works and his masculine robustness carried him off without any hesitation as the greatest blessing in the field of French art.' Another journalist wrote:

> Passing through Prague, Sarah Bernhardt was seduced by the genius of a handsome, young stranger whom she met there quite by chance. And as our Sarah—our national Sarah—has all the gifts she had a presentiment of the vogue the young painter was to have in the future, and attached him with golden chains to her artistic personality, to her theatre. As for the man himself, nobody knew him. He had been kept hidden in a luxuriously appointed underground apartment—a miniature grotto of Monte Cristo.

Some of the inventions were even worse. One article stated that Sarah had discovered Mucha in Hungary, travelling with a gipsy caravan through the *puszta*, and had been enchanted by his violin and his singing at full moon. The myths, an infallible sign of fame, collapsed one after the other in the cold light of truth but the story about the gipsy caravan kept reappearing in the Press. Even in very serious articles Mucha was described as a Hungarian, in spite of letters he had written to the papers in defence of his true nationality. To such a fervent patriot the confusion almost invalidated all the results of his work. It was not for himself that he wanted to be successful, but for his nation.

Sarah Bernhardt had every reason to be pleased with her discovery. Her posters so far had been uninteresting—below average, in fact. In an age when paraffin was advertised by Chéret and the cabaret singer, Aristide Bruant, by Toulouse-Lautrec, a contemporary critic could write: 'Since *Gismonda* Mucha has been the only poster artist to have faithfully reproduced the features of the great tragédienne.' But it was more than just her outer appearance. For the first time somebody had succeeded in rendering her soul, the elusive magic of her personality on the stage. The poster for *Gismonda*—and those that followed—were equal to her own art which, irrespective of the value of the play, made each an event. Today most of the tragedies in which she appeared are dead and forgotten. Yet the poster has outlived the play, and in the poster Sarah Bernhardt has outlived her own legend.

The contract Bernhardt made with Mucha was not confined to posters only. He also had to design sets and costumes and to collaborate on the production whenever a scene was to be properly balanced. Nowadays his various

duties would be performed by different people with appropriate credits, but this was not the case in the nineteenth century. The décor, a faithful imitation of reality, required no special invention; nor did costumes, copied from museum pieces or dresses for contemporary plays made by the big *couturières*. The set designer was never mentioned; the critics were not interested in what was just the technical side of the production. Sarah Bernhardt, who usually directed the plays herself, nevertheless required expert assistance, and Father was capable of it, thanks to his theatrical experience in Vienna and his years of research for historical illustrations. With his detailed knowledge of the subject he was able to give full rein to fantasy in designing her costumes, finding each time a way to stress the effect of her slight and unusually slender figure. He sketched her jewellery, designed her hairstyles and selected material for her dressmakers. When, in 1896, she revived *La Dame aux Camélias* and decided to have contemporary décor—a novelty which the critics found very daring—the two worked on the entire production together, and Mucha's designs influenced from the stage the fashion of the day.

Father knew intimately every detail of Sarah Bernhardt's appearance, and this is how he described her:

> Sarah had a low forehead which she was a little ashamed of and always carefully concealed it with plenty of hair. Her main object was to emphasize her eyes which were somewhat small in relation to her cheeks and forehead. The shadow under her curls completely filled the depression round her eyes and, with a few deft touches of mascara, eyes that a moment before had been almost expressionless, acquired unexpected depth and the proper dimensions. In profile her somewhat wide nose had an exceptionally fine line: its bridge forcefully revealed her artistic independence and personality, a small bump on the ridge showed

her fighting qualities, while its interesting termination in a slightly turned-up tip indicated vivid imagination and volatility. Long, narrow nostrils testified to her little developed and therefore easily controlled sensuality. Her mouth was particularly remarkable; the lips were beautifully symmetrical with a clean groove on the upper one; when compressed, they formed an almost straight line, only slightly raised at the corners. In tragic parts she was able to keep them drooping for several hours and convey a completely altered personality. Her lower lip was thrust slightly forward and with her firm chin, indicated an exceptionally resolute character. She preferred to keep her beautiful, long neck covered, right up to the ears, particularly in society, since the neck first gives away age in fine wrinkles which no cosmetics or massage can remove. But on the stage, with artificial light and good make-up—particularly later on in her fifties, when she came into her real beauty—her bare neck and shoulders were magnificent.

Her posture was always upright, even in advanced age. She never wore stays, and her movements were uncommonly smooth and harmonious. She had expressiveness and classical nobility which those who did not see her could never fully visualize. And then there was the particular magic of her movements: 'In all her gestures there is a spiral principle,' Reynaldo Hahn once said. 'She sits down—in a spiral; her dress flows round her, embracing her with a tender spiral movement; the train of the dress forms the shape of a spiral on the ground, and this in turn is completed upwards, in the opposite direction, by her head and bust.' Yet the crowning glory of her whole appearance was her voice, her silvery, flawless voice, so well trained that she could reduce it to the lowest whisper, then storm majestically, and the next moment let it drop again to a pianissimo of bell-like sweetness. 'Marvellous creature with a voice of singing stars,' Oscar Wilde said of her. To this one must add the silken hair, unusually luxuriant and unruly, which Sarah was a past master at persuading to meet her requirements. A gleaming, fiery red, it blended superbly with her nacreous complexion. But it was above all her clothes that gave her the stamp of originality. With utter disregard for fashion, she dressed in her own way, and

tailors and dressmakers, accustomed to the normal routine, found it extremely difficult to do what she wanted. In her dress, as in her art, she always bore in mind the overall impression she wished to make, and nothing would deflect her from achieving her objective. Her clothes were in keeping with her slim figure. She never allowed the waistline above her hips to be interrupted horizontally by a belt. The folds of her long dresses flowed down from her neck to the ground, prolonged into a train. If she did use a belt, its purpose was not to divide her dress in two but to gather up one that was too long; she always wore it from one hip in an oblique line down to the other side, and there were constantly some trinkets hanging from the belt making tinkling noises. She wore these pendants and charms on everything, they were usually of great artistic value and wherever she was, jewellery flashed, tinkled and glittered all over her. She liked everything unusual—her rings especially were always quite extraordinary in size and shape. After the première of *Médée* I had to draw her a bracelet and ring in the shape of the snake I had drawn on her hand when I did the poster. This was then made by Fouquet, all in gold, with the head set in opals, rubies and diamonds. I should say that rarely has a person's spirit been more faithfully and exactly reflected in her body. Every feature of her face, every movement of her clothing was profoundly conditioned by her spiritual need.

She had enormous energy which she placed entirely at the service of her art. This enabled her to pioneer her own way over half a century, unconquered by competition or age. From the year 1862 she lived almost continuously at the theatre. Joys, privations, hopes, losses—all vanished from her soul as soon as she walked on to the stage and felt the flood of sympathy and love flowing towards her from the auditorium. This was her real life. The only life worth living and I have no doubt that she secretly wished destiny would allow her to stay before the eyes of her beloved audience to the end, when she would pass away into that sea of deep and living sympathy.

Her daily life began early in the morning, at half past seven, with a bath. This was the start of her work. The tailor, dressmaker, or a journalist would knock on the door, and she would

deal with them from the bathroom. Then came breakfast—hot chocolate, eggs, jam, rolls and butter, by which time the carriage was already at the door. She rarely left home alone; by breakfast time more people would come to see her, and she continued the correspondence on her way to the theatre.

The arrival at the stage-door was an event which no one described better than Rostand: 'A brougham stops, a woman enveloped in furs jumps out, threads her way with a smile through the crowd, attracted by the jingling of bells on the harness, and mounts the winding stairs; plunges into a room crowded with flowers and heated like a hothouse. Throws her little beribboned handbag with its apparently inexhaustible contents into one corner and her bewinged hat into another; takes off her furs and instantaneously dwindles into a mere scabbard of white silk, rushes on to a dimly lit stage and immediately puts life into the loitering and yawning crowd.'

Rehearsals began at nine o'clock and continued until five in the afternoon. If there was a matinée, the rehearsal finished at one. After a short pause, when the stage was being built, the performance started and went on till five, the stage was once more changed, and the show started at eight, lasting till eleven or half past. After that Sarah would eat a small dinner in her dressing-room—meat, salad, a sweet, champagne—and go home. She usually arrived about one o'clock, undressed and learned her part till two. When she was preparing for her American tour, a lady came to teach her English from 2 till 3 a.m. Finally she went to bed, and the following morning the whole routine started once more at half past seven in the bathroom. When she was rehearsing for *Hamlet* she put on a man's suit the moment she arrived at the theatre, so as to get used to moving like a man, and had an hour's fencing lesson every day on the stage with her son Maurice, one of the best fencers in Paris. Maurice was a nice lad, but that was all, and several times he squandered all his mother's wealth. He loved her devotedly, protected her against insults and fought many duels on her account. Besides writing a play called *Nini l'Assomeur* which was performed for a short time at the Porte St Martin, and a book *Impressions d'Amérique*, he did nothing to distinguish himself. But he had a good heart...

When there was no rush on at the theatre, Sarah would lunch at home. She had a beautiful house with rooms full of all kinds of objets d'art, gifts and souvenirs from her journeys. She also had a studio in the house for her sculpturing at which she had quite a talent, even exhibiting her works at the Salon. Once, when she came to the exhibition and saw her creations among the works of professional sculptors, she got so depressed that she wanted to smash them with her umbrella. She liked receiving guests in her studio, which was arranged like a salon with a lot of draperies, brocades and curtains, and with one wall made into a cage with golden bars for her lioness. She also had a panther, a lynx, two monkeys and several screeching parrots amid her Arab weapons, jewellery cases, valuable carpets, pictures and sculptures. A few steps led from the studio into the dining-room, a large and serene room, with a long table in the centre where there were never less than ten or twelve guests for lunch. Usually they were intimate friends like Jean Lorrain, Catulle Mendès, Henri Bauer, Georges Clairin, Louise Abbéma, Rostand, Guitry or Reynaldo Hahn. Sarah presided with her back to the window in a sumptuous Gothic armchair, discussing theatre matters and business—lunching with her was not meant to be only pleasure. Besides the actual guests there were the tradesmen, jewellers, dressmakers, who called throughout the meal, sat down on Sarah's right and left, transacted their business and went away again. Sometimes there was a whole crowd of these men and women sitting behind Sarah, one asking if this lace was to go on that coat, another enquiring about Madame Patry's wig, another wanting to know what colour stockings were to be worn. Meanwhile the conversation round the table continued with those behind Sarah chipping in with their questions. The whole lunch did not last long—a half hour, may be three-quarters—then the last mouthful—black coffee, and off they all went again to the theatre.

At rehearsals there would sometimes be as many as fifty people, with Sarah directing. As I was responsible for the sets, I would be sitting up in the gallery so as to get the right view and Sarah, whenever she had time, would come up and sit beside me to discuss details. The rehearsals of a new play started with

everybody sitting and listening to the author reading it aloud. The next day he would read it once more. Then the rehearsals started with actors reading their parts and Sarah usually knew at the second reading half her role by heart. In the end she knew everybody's role so well that she could do the prompting without the book. She directed sitting at the edge of the stage, flushed with beads of perspiration on her brow, every few minutes a maid would run over and dab her neck with eau de cologne, and so it went on till five o'clock. Then everything stopped, Sarah would have a light snack and lie down on a bearskin rug for a rest. But there was a continual shuffling around her, people asking questions, the stage manager, dressmakers, actors, so that her rest was rather doubtful. At seven o'clock there was supper. She had, however, the rare ability to sleep whenever she wanted. If she drove to the theatre alone, she would sleep in the carriage throughout the journey. During a performance, if she had no clothes change at the interval, she would draw a curtain in her dressing-room, the guests remaining in the outer part, and would lie down on the bearskin rug in front of the fireplace, falling asleep immediately. Ten minutes later the stage manager would tap at her door: 'Madame, pour le deux-ième!' She would wake up, slip quickly in front of the mirror, adjust her make-up and hair. 'Madame—le rideau!', and there she was on the stage, refreshed as if she had a good hour's sleep. Before the show started she would be dealing with guests and tradesmen, giving instructions, placing orders; yet as soon as she was on the stage, she became so involved with her part that even back in her dressing-room, she continued living in it. At each performance of *Camille* in the scene when Robert throws her money and goes off, she genuinely wept and took a long time to calm down afterwards.

Sarah was an artist through and through. People talk of the fantastic wealth she accumulated and her self-advertisement. It is true that she amassed money, but it took her more time and work than spending it. She liked money but had no idea of its real value. She would accept the plays of young writers, put them on with sets costing thousands of francs, and after one or two performances the play might be off. She helped where she

could; writers in distress were her brothers, and she never refused when they asked for her help. That was why she often found herself on the rocks, but after a while she would have again accumulated millions, only to spend them with equal rapidity.

12

At the time of *Gismonda* Sarah's troupe was at the Théâtre de la Renaissance in the Boulevard St Martin, a cosy, intimate theatre, which still retains its peculiar atmosphere of a lady's boudoir. It somehow went with her personality, and even after so many years the traces of her being linger in the gilt stucco, brocade curtains and the dark red plush of the stalls. When the name of the theatre lights up above the entrance, it seems as if nothing has changed since the nights when gentlemen in top hats alighted from carriages with their ladies in dazzling gowns and sparkling with jewels and the wide glass doors were flanked by posters of *Lorenzaccio* or *Gismonda*. The theatre was splendid and unique. There were no cinemas, no television sets; actors reached only a narrow circle of spectators. One had to be physically present at a performance, for the rest their art remained a shining legend, inscrutable, and awe-inspiring like the lives and deeds of monarchs. Sarah alone, thanks to her posters, emerged from the inaccessible twilight of the theatre into the streets, to appear for the first time in full view of the admiring crowd that would have never been able to see her in reality.

Sarah was not afraid to include in her company the finest actors, such as Lucien Guitry, Coquelin, de Max, Deval or Mesdames Patry, Marthold and Valday. They formed the court of which she was the queen and whose

masters of ceremony were Rostand, Mirbeau, Sardou and Armand Sylvestre. As in every court, the sovereign had her whims: assisting young authors, who were probably better lovers than writers. When Pierre Berton wrote *Zaza* for her, she staged it, blinded to its shortcomings by love, but she nevertheless entrusted the leading role to her rival, Réjane. To make up for this feminine quirk she enthusiastically promoted the play all over the world, persuaded Belasco to stage it in New York, invited Leoncavallo to set it to music and sent it to Oscar Wilde in the hope he might introduce it to England.

> There is a fascinating, irresistible insincerity and incompleteness about this little piece [Oscar replied]. But in an alien tongue it would seem too much like a phrase from the great book, re-echoed by repetition on the lips of the shop-girl . . . Its title is, of course, vulgar and absurd, which is excellent from an artistic point of view, but perhaps poor for the box office where the patronage of English tourists is being sought . . . No, in English the play would be like Shakespeare in the mouth of a tinker . . .

Wilde was perhaps the only person who dared to tell her the truth to her face in such a delicate matter. He had no reason to wish to flatter her. Sarah, for her part, saw him as her intellectual guru. She was fascinated by his elegance and wit, and although she did not like writing letters—she preferred to send hundreds of words by telegram, or use a messenger—kept up a lively correspondence with him which, despite all its warmth, reads rather like a dialogue between two would-be Olympians. Sarah was gratified to have a confessor sufficiently masculine to make a confession worthwhile and sufficiently feminine to take her confidences seriously. Besides, it gave both an agreeable opportunity for appropriate improvisations on any theme that came into their minds.

> One of the papers [Wilde wrote from Monte Carlo] printed yesterday a large photograph of you and today, in the same publication, I see Our Lady of the Palms, as Mucha painted her when she played in horrid *Gismonda*. I laugh to see this and think of what Genevieve Ward once said: 'When I see the same actress's picture on the front page of a provincial newspaper two days in succession, my heart goes out to the editor's wife, for I too have known and suffered a husband's infidelity.'

So much, by the way, for *Gismonda* as a play.

Sarah copied Wilde's sarcastic humour and endeavoured to rival him in eccentricity. She bought herself a coffin, put it in her bedroom, slept in it and had herself photographed in it. Soon she contented herself in this correspondence with merely writing aphorisms, sending them on to Wilde who translated them and posted them back. They are like her sculpture—amidst a great many undistinguished platitudes an occasional personal note. 'Men hate scenes, that is why I make them in public places. Scenes are as essential to the progress of love as are wars to the progress of civilization.' 'A woman should never marry a man who lives beyond her means.' 'French women dress; American women upholster.' They were not always necessarily true, but they sounded good.

Her excursions into sculpture, painting and literature were a natural expression of a highly artistic being, compelled throughout life to reproduce the works of others. Like every actress, she was boundlessly ambitious. Even in a game of cards she could not bear to lose and cheated shamelessly. In her writing, painting and sculpture, she was convinced that with industry and perseverance she would master everything. Her motto 'Quand même' was printed even on her writing paper. It was only on the stage, where she was a truly great artist, that her self-

confidence deserted her. 'Anybody who has seen Sarah,' wrote her intimate friend the painter Louise Abbéma, 'a few moments before *Phèdre*, could not possibly imagine the fear, the terrible fear she felt of letting down a masterpiece of which she was always so magnificently worthy and in which she showed such a vast range.' While her judgement was often marred by uncritical enthusiasm, she could assess the value of her fellow-actors with mathematical exactness:

> Henry Irving is an admirable artist but he is not a comedian. Coquelin is an admirable comedian but he is not an artist. Mounet-Sully has genius which he sometimes puts at the service of the comedian in him and sometimes at the service of the artist; but, to offset this, there are times when his exaggerations both as an artist and a comedian are enough to make lovers of the True and Beautiful shudder. Réjane, the most comedian of all comedians, is an artist when she wants to be.

What impression would Bernhardt make today if we were to see her deploy her arsenal of pathetic gestures and vocal modulations so much admired by her contemporaries? Would she fascinate us the same way as she fascinated her audiences at the Théâtre de la Renaissance seventy, eighty years ago? In all probability she would, since it is the actor's personality that matters and not the superficial gesture which changes from generation to generation. Jouvet remains a great actor, even in old-fashioned films. So do Chaplin and Greta Garbo. Sarah belonged among the greatest actresses and would remain so to this day. She felt as we do and could not fail to touch our hearts. 'Life is short,' she wrote, 'even for those who live a long time. One must live for the few by whom one is known and appreciated, judged and forgiven . . . One must hate very little, for it is tiring. One must despise

Mucha with Berthe de Lalande in 1897. This photograph survived all Mucha's efforts to destroy evidence of their friendship

Mucha in his famous Russian shirt, 1897

Rose Carnation

From the 'Flowers' decorative panels, 1897

Iris

Lily

From the 'Flowers' decorative panels, 1897

Study of nude with stockings. Pencil, Paris 1899

a great deal, forgive often, and never forget. Forgiving is not forgetting. Not with me, at least.'

The history of the *Gismonda* poster did not end with its billing. On the contrary. Sarah had ordered it to remind the public of the play's hundredth performance, and the fact that she had merely telephoned Lemercier shows that she had not expected anything out of the ordinary and ordered the smallest possible quantity. Her surprise must have been all the more pleasing when she realized she had got a work of art. The enthusiastic reaction of the public suggested even more. The new poster was not only good advertising but also a collector's piece. Like most people who do not know the true value of money, she loved business and any form of speculation attracted her irresistibly. In July 1895, after *Gismonda* had been taken off, she ordered and paid for in advance a further 4,000 copies of the poster, expressly stating that Lemercier was to deliver them in instalments and not all at once. The poster was evidently to remain a rarity. By then collectors not only bribed the bill-stickers, but using razors, cut out and stole the most coveted posters from the hoardings. Sarah kept back a few copies for her next American tour, put the rest, one by one, up for sale. As she paid less than a franc for each poster, the entire operation represented a considerable profit. This at least seems to be evident from the court proceedings which took place on 4 August 1897. Lemercier in fact delivered only 3,450 copies of the new order, admitting that he no longer had the remaining 550 —and offered to return the 467 francs 50 centimes they were worth. Sarah emphatically declined the offer, demanding 5,000 francs damages. However, she came up against

a snag. The court recognized that part of the order had been misappropriated but jibbed at the damages, since Sarah was reluctant to disclose at what price she was selling. After much haggling the judgement went in her favour, but apart from the repayment of 467 francs 50 centimes, the court only awarded her 500 francs compensation, rejecting Lemercier's offer to print the missing posters on the grounds that their artistic value must not be reduced by any further printings. This established beyond doubt that the posters existed in limited quantity. No more were printed, the stone was destroyed, and their stature was that of original lithographs. For Lemercier the results were disastrous. From 1896, Sarah Bernhardt transferred her orders to Champenois and with them her protégé artist.

The sum Lemercier paid Mucha for the *Gismonda* poster is not known. It was probably about 150 francs. At a very conservative estimate, the 4,000 posters brought Sarah some 130,000 francs, so that the offer she now made to pay Mucha 3,000 francs monthly, plus another 1,500 for each new poster, was generous but not extravagant.

When Sarah signed her contract with Mucha for permanent collaboration, she already had his next task in mind: she was planning to stage a romantic piece by a twenty-nine-year-old author who, a year earlier, had made a successful début at the Comédie Française with a verse drama, *Les Romanesques*; once again it was a verse play based on a thirteenth-century legend about the love of the troubadour, Jufroi, for Mélisande, Princess of Tripoli.

> One day Sarah asked me to read through a new play, as she wanted to hear my opinion and to know my views on a possible production. I took the manuscript and started reading it. The

author was Edmond Rostand, and the play was called *La Princesse Lointaine.*

After I had made a thorough study of the text, we had another meeting. Later Rostand joined us and we came to a decision: Sarah and I were to produce the play together.

Rostand was not yet famous. *Cyrano* was only staged two years later, but by now it was clear that Sarah had made a wise choice. Rostand was a romantic which suited her well; he was an expert at writing glorious tirades and he appeared like a breath of fresh air amidst the grim naturalism of the 'nineties.

As I was staging *La Princess Lointaine* with Sarah and there was so much work connected with it, there was no time left for a poster. We had to content ourselves with a more lavish programme, using some of the drawings from the sets. Devising the costume for Mélisande, I had put lilies in Sarah's hair and invented that long flowing robe which became then so typical of her personality. The first night was a great success, both for Sarah and Rostand, while to me it brought great satisfaction because I had done the entire thing in my own way, and people saw something new, that they were not accustomed to.

Mucha never spoke about Art Nouveau. Instead he regularly used the phrase: 'I did it in my own way.' He took his decorative elements from nature, applying the same rules as the village embroiderers and folk artists in his native Moravia. The connection with the style of his contemporaries somewhat escaped him. In his burning zeal for his nation he was convinced that he could bring an original, purely Slav element to the whole movement. He so abominated copying and regimentation that he made no effort to link up with any existing group. I at least have found no obvious connection between his studio and other centres of Art Nouveau, whether in Paris or in Belgium. He remained isolated, as though he were blind

to the work of his contemporaries, and confined himself to stubborn pronouncements of his own views on art.

His contacts with England, the original home of the Art Nouveau movement, were equally slight. He met Beardsley and his work appeared in London exhibitions, but he never visited the city which had such a sensitive approach to his style. His only direct contact with Britain was through his three large posters: 'Waverley Cycles', 'West End Revue' and the grandiose 'Nestlé Food' published in honour of Queen Victoria's jubilee. Neither Walter Crane nor Mackintosh appear in his address book, although he must have been very familiar with their work, at least through his English pupils and from the exhibitions where his works appeared alongside theirs. It may be that this is due to the lack of a common language, or to a factor stressed by Roger Guerrand: 'Constructive and decorative at the same time, the Scottish "linearists" held a position on their own within Art Nouveau. The marvellous charm of their creations springs from a quite remarkable combination of extravagant fantasy and severe simplicity—a rare achievement in decorative art.' The fact that Father did not belong to any school or group resulted in his disappearing from the Parisian scene as rapidly as he had emerged. Whereas Van de Velde, Horta, Guimard and Gaudi continued to be active in the same field, in the same environment, and everybody could follow their development, Mucha, as we shall see later, decamped without any warning to America and then, in 1913, to Prague, cut off from the rest of the world by the war. One might say that after having written himself into history, he painstakingly rubbed himself out again. Never can a man have done so much to ensure that so little was known about him.

His attitude was clear and unambiguous:

I do not want to be an artist if it should mean creating art for art's sake. I would rather be an ordinary limner—because that is where I see the mission of art. The conception of modern art as subject to passing fashion is an insult to art. Art is every bit as eternal as man's progress, for it is the function of art to light man on his way. Art is therefore in a continuous state of development and is always a few steps ahead of humanity. Having grown out of the soil of its own people, art thrives on its own roots, grows green on the sap of its own country and blossoms with its own flowers, in order to be entwined in a common garland with the flowers of other nations. The more original it is, the more beautiful will be each flower—the more beautiful and valuable will be the whole garland.

His style, complete with all the characteristics of Art Nouveau, which from now on he merely combined and developed further, dates from 1 January 1895. Probably every encounter with new forms, from Grasset to Gallé, sank deep into his subconscious to mingle with his own inspiration in such a homogeneous fusion, so faithfully corresponding to his own ideas, that he was quite right in speaking about his 'own way'. Whether or not outside influences lose their identity in an artist depends on the strength of his personality. A letter written in 1926, discovered only recently, may perhaps reveal something more about the origins of Mucha's particular style.

Dearest friend,

My first contact with you was through our mutual friend, Henri Bourrelier. On the wall in his office in the Rue de Mézières, right behind his head, hung two of your black and white ornamental designs in Indian ink which made a strong impression on me. They had everything—purity of line, beauty of proportion, firm execution, wealth of inspiration and originality of invention. This was especially true of the one with cats with arched backs—arranged in a row of black and white animals each covering about

a third of the next one and the whole forming a delightful motif for a frieze. When I asked M. Bourrelier who did the design, he replied: 'A young and very talented artist who is illustrating a book we are bringing out.' 'His name?' 'Ruty!' Well, it was you —and my admiration for you dates from that moment . . . You have continued with your ingenious designs, and I have continued to think highly of them. Right down to the present day, on the many occasions when I have had cause to refer to the origins of Art Nouveau, I have never failed to stress the name of Ruty as one who, in the very beginning, brought to the cradle his gift of delightful and ingenious ornamental motifs.

Ruty was an illustrator who in 1889 worked for Armand Colin. Later he painted figural compositions and landscapes in Brittany and towards the end of his life, when he became deaf, he dedicated himself solely to symbolic and theosophical pictures. His first meeting with Mucha may have been in 1890 or 1891. In 1894, Armand Colin published Judith Gautier's *Mémoires d'un Eléphant Blanc* in which the full-page illustrations and the illustrations in the text were done by Mucha, while Ruty did the headings to the various chapters. His drawings and composition were undoubtedly of a lower standard, but at least half of all his headings were in the form of decorative bands made up of repeated motifs, some of which became typical of Mucha's work: hands, eyes, a finger placed on the lips, even a bleeding heart. It almost seems as if Ruty's work contained the seed of Father's future vocabulary. It is true that all these symbols were mystical and Rosicrucian and could be found in other artists, but never used so consistently or in this particular arrangement. This similarity is often striking. But equally striking is the difference between Ruty's decorative bands and the headings with rather crude symbolic scenes. Despite what he says in his letter, Father's intervention cannot be excluded,

since he helped many of his friends whenever they were at a loss. In his letters Ruty calls Father his master and elder teacher. The exchange of this correspondence took place at a time when Ruty was gravely ill and evidently in a desperate situation. Father's letter is full of comforting and encouraging words. Was he paying off a debt, or was he restoring the self-confidence of a less accomplished and unhappy friend?

13

FATHER'S success brought him increased prestige at Madame Charlotte's. Although his new studio had been converted into a comfortable living apartment, he still took his meals at the common table in the *crémerie*. Gauguin also, now preparing for his last and final journey to Tahiti, continued to come there out of habit.

> One day, a new and somewhat exotic character appeared among us [to use Father's own words], the Swedish writer Strindberg. Like the others, he appeared from nowhere, settled down among us, and it was remarkable how in the course of time each new arrival adapted himself perfectly. Soon there would be no difference between us, and if some were not quick enough to adjust, the rest of us soon helped them to do so.

Adapting Strindberg was not perhaps a wholly successful operation. His character was anything but adaptable, and at this time he was going through the worst crisis of his life. Like the Symbolists, the Nabis and the whole remarkable generation of revolt against reason, Strindberg devoted himself to mysticism and occultism, but unlike them, he fell into the brook which the others were crossing with pleasant shudders down the spine on the slippery stepping-stones of rational thought.

His spiritual crisis had been developing over a long period. Since his childhood he had felt or wished to feel cut off, pushed away and persecuted. He enjoyed self-pity. His father—a not very successful shipping agent—

was a cold, reserved man, and his mother, a former servant, was feckless and bigoted. When she died and his father married his housekeeper, the situation in no way improved. Strindberg assumed the role of the unloved orphan; he was afraid of everything—of the dark, of going hungry, of being beaten, wounded, unwanted—and as he grew up, his fears became the masochistic pleasures of the martyr. He believed he was chosen, interpreting every setback as a proof of the Almighty's love. He lived in three rooms with six brothers and sisters, two servants, an unsympathetic father and a stepmother, although his need was to be a pampered only child. To compensate for maternal care he created a personal God whom he in turn loved and hated, but who was always there to keep him company. When he quarrelled with God, he did not aspire to a free-thinker's independence but abandoned himself like a rejected lover to debauch in the base company of the powers of darkness.

There was the same pattern in his hopeless marriages. The woman, wife and mother in one, was the object of his boundless worship and adoration until he discovered that instead of a goddess he had married an average, perhaps even slightly frivolous person. Then he hated her and finished by running away from her in utter despair. He wanted too much from everyone and was inevitably let down by God, women and even Nietzsche, whom he had so much admired. But as he could not live long without any of these, he returned, contrite, to new and equally catastrophic loves and to the old, patient God.

At the turn of the year, 1894–5, he had just wrecked his second marriage and narrowly escaped suicide in Berlin by confessing his whole agony in two drastic autobiographical books. 'It was with feelings of savage glee that I

returned homewards from the Gare du Nord where I had parted from my little wife,' he begins *Inferno*, his tormented description of the phase in his life which opened on that cold November day when he appeared at Father's table as 'a new and somewhat exotic character'.* He was probably brought along by Gauguin who had met him at the Molards. Ida Molard was a Swedish sculptress who smoked cigars, dressed as a man and had been the mistress of Strindberg's friend, the opera singer Fritz Arlberg. She lived at No. 6, rue Vercingétorix, her studio being the rendezvous of a whole group of unruly young people, professing anarchism, Symbolism, free love and other outrages that shocked Strindberg profoundly. But Ida Molard was the only person he knew in Paris well enough to turn to in his self-imposed flight.

The *crémerie* was evidently a much more congenial society for him.

> When he arrived most of us did not know him, but he himself saw to it that we knew who he was. As it was usual for new and distinguished members to be put into the hands of Slewinski and myself, he was brought to our table. This was next to the bar where, if she had nothing more urgent to do, Madame Charlotte presided. During the meal, conversation ranged far and wide. Those who knew Strindberg spoke to him about his works, and those who did not know him sought to make his acquaintance. He was a remarkable person in every respect—tall and slim, with an enterprising moustache on his upper lip, always well dressed. Every day he would sit in the corner near the bar with a cigarette in his mouth, amusing both himself and us with his ready answers. But he was not a cheerful man. He rarely laughed. He livened up usually only when he came to visit me or when we went for a walk. By and by we discovered we had a lot in common and as I was just moving to the new studio, he took over

* *Inferno* by August Strindberg, translated by Mary Sandbach, London, Hutchinson, 1962.

my little room and embellished it out of all recognition: he had it completely covered, walls, ceiling and tiled floor, in a sort of grey sackcloth which was evidently meant to correspond with the state of his mind.

This was actually Father's third move in the rue de la Grande Chaumière. After the little room above Madame Charlotte's, before taking the studio at No. 8, he lived for some time in a somewhat bigger room at No. 12. This is where Strindberg stayed until 20 February 1896, when he moved a few hundred yards away to the Hôtel Orfila in the rue d'Assas.

What the two actually had most in common was that both took occultism and mysticism very seriously and had found in each other a willing listener to their theories. Strindberg, who was older, must have been the teacher, since Father now began to express some of his views in almost identical words to those used by Strindberg in *Inferno*: 'The idea again occurred to me that Providence must have some mission which it intended me to carry out in this world, and that this was the beginning of my education for it.' Strindberg described his—or their—ideological climate with remarkable frankness: 'The fact was that a kind of religion had developed in me, though I was quite unable to formulate it. It was a spiritual state rather than an opinion upon theories, a hotch-potch of impressions that were far from being condensed into thoughts.'

They had the same passion for science which they freely blended with medieval alchemy. They confused coincidence with consequence and preferred such explanations of natural phenomena that confirmed the existence of forces beyond the reach of human mind.

Both were simultaneously 'conquering Paris', Mucha

with diffident hope through hard work, Strindberg with the obstinacy of lust for fame. As early as 1883, when Sarah Bernhardt visited Stockholm, he had thought to arouse her interest in his play, *Herr Bengt's Wife*, and later tried his luck once again in Paris through Porel, the husband of Madame Réjane. But it was Antoine who opened the way for him. At the Théâtre Libre, Antoine had begun systematically presenting foreign authors and had more or less discovered 'the Scandinavians' for the Paris public. Since the first production of *Ghosts* in 1890, he had by 1892 staged five Ibsen plays and, finally, in January 1895, Strindberg's very successful *Miss Julia*. The French critics split into two camps. The Symbolists, and their followers, were enthusiastic; the nationalists, led by the redoubtable critic, Francisque Sarcey, were against, showering insults on all imports, whether from Russia, Germany or Scandinavia. Strindberg, a tireless trouble-maker anyhow, made his debut in the midst of a wasp's nest and immediately became a welcome pretext for polemics. The situation was made even more precarious since *Miss Julia* was produced in a joint programme with Goncourt's one-act play, *A Bas Le Progrès*, which ended in a fiasco. On the very eve of the première, Goncourt had published a malicious article in the *Echo de Paris* doing his best to discredit his Scandinavian colleague in advance, and although his intolerance was pilloried by Ginisty and Henri Bauer, it was evident that the nationalist campaign was growing and was assuming a nationwide character. When, in August 1893, Antoine, who by then had staged altogether eleven Scandinavian plays, put on an older Strindberg drama, *Bankruptcy*, in a badly cut version, Sarcey wrote with vicious satisfaction: 'I do not believe that any Northern writer has the ability

to conceive, arrange and develop a play for the theatre.' This was too much even for Björnsen living in peaceful Switzerland. 'We consider,' he wrote, 'that Francisque Sarcey and other French Chinamen have every right to bar our way to the Promised Land, but if they give us the favour of entry, let it be with full and complete control over our works.'

In 1894, the 'Nordomania' reached its peak. When Lugné-Poë successfully staged Strindberg's one-act play, *The Creditors*, at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre and poems by Henri de Régnier, recited as part of the programme behind a translucent green curtain, provoked gales of laughter, savage quarrels took place during the interval and were carried out into the street where the impassioned protagonists attacked each other with umbrellas. 'The "Nordic" school had its evening of *Hernani*,' wrote Henri Fouquier in *Figaro*, and even Sarcey had reluctantly to admit that Strindberg possessed a certain talent. But, once again, as though he were really pursued by the powers of darkness, the tide of events turned against Strindberg. The Symbolists, delighted with the spirit of rebellion and individualism shown by the 'Nordistes', hailed them with anarchist slogans and brought upon themselves and particularly upon their Scandinavian protégé, the wave of xenophobia which gripped France after Caserio's assassination of President Carnot. 'The anarchists . . . are wielding the dagger for which Messieurs Ibsen, Björnsen and Strindberg have sharpened the blade,' wrote one paper. All foreigners suddenly became suspect and were placed under strict police surveillance. Strindberg, whose persecution mania thrived in the offensive climate of sneaking informers, managed to antagonize his admirers by two most unfortunate actions. In a

symposium published by the periodical *Eclair*, he ardently backed Zola, recommending him to the Symbolists, who were just then shocked and furious about his new book *Lourdes*, and in the *Revue Blanche* he wrote an article entitled 'L'Infériorité de la Femme' which aroused the scorn and derision of practically everyone in Paris. By the end of 1894, attacks on the Scandinavians were further intensified. Maurras warned the public that 'these barbarians are sullying our soul' and Jules Lemaître, in the *Revue de Deux Mondes*, denied them any originality, proving by quotations from Strindberg, that all their ideas came from France. There was no doubt, Strindberg had achieved his proud dream of conquering Paris, but it was a Pyrrhic victory. His article on women was debated for two months in the Press and at public meetings by such people as Mallarmé, Besnard, Dumas *fils*, Catulle Mendès, Daudet, Octave Mirbeau and Clémenceau. The result was catastrophic and when Strindberg published reports on some of his chemical experiments, his fate was sealed. By then the wave of 'Nordomania' was on the retreat. The next Scandinavian to appear on the scene, Knut Hamsun, failed to attract any interest at all and Strindberg, in spite of all the commotion he had caused, was sinking into poverty and oblivion.

'All he wanted now,' said Father, 'was to obtain recognition for his experiments. His hands were covered with sores, but he never stopped dabbling in his alchemistic kitchen. When he came to see me, the poor man could not even put his coat on with his bandaged hands.'

The studies that were exercising Strindberg's imagination were a fantastic blend of medieval superstition and half-digested science. On the eve of momentous discoveries in atomic structure he wanted to make gold by

the transmutation of elements and prove the hopeless claim of the alchemists that such elements as sulphur were in fact compounds.

> Back once more in my miserable student's room in the Latin Quarter [he wrote in *Inferno*], I delved into my trunk and drew forth from their hiding place six crucibles of fine porcelain which I had robbed myself to buy. A pair of tongs and a packet of pure sulphur completed the apparatus of my laboratory. All that remained to be done was to make a fire of furnace heat in the stove, secure the door, and draw down the blinds, for since the execution of Caserio, only three months earlier, it had become dangerous to handle chemical apparatus in Paris.
>
> Night fell, the flames of hell rose from the burning sulphur, but towards morning I had ascertained the presence of carbon in sulphur, previously regarded as an elementary substance. By doing this I ... had ... overthrown the prevailing chemical theories, and won the only immortality accorded to mortals.*

After he had demonstrated the presence of carbon in sulphur, he still needed to ascertain the presence of hydrogen and oxygen, but by now his hands caused him so much pain that he had to go into hospital. As he was afraid that people might think he was being treated for syphilis, he made up the story that his hands had been burned during one of his experiments. In fact, from 11–31 January 1895, he was treated at the Hôpital St Louis for psoriasis.

On his return from hospital, he devoted himself even more avidly to chemistry and occultism. 'We used to go for long walks,' said Father, 'along the Boulevard St Michel, through the streets of the Quartier Latin, and to the Montparnasse cemetery, where we opened up our hearts to each other about life after death and similar serious matters.'

* *Inferno*, p. 22.

Strindberg has dealt in great detail with these cemetery walks in his book, *Sylva Sylvarum*. He particularly enjoyed stopping at old gravestones, marking the resting place of his alchemistic predecessors who, he believed, were guiding him from beyond the grave along the paths of science. His friends, seeing that these practices did not improve his condition, advised him to give up his walks in the cemetery and warned him that poisonous vapours were lingering over graves which could undermine his health. This was evidently the wrong thing to say. Strindberg admitted that for two hours after a visit to the cemetery he was conscious of a taste on his tongue that was suspiciously deathlike and immediately conceived the idea to catch these emanations and examine them chemically. 'Equipped with a small bottle containing liquid lead acetate, I set off on this hunt for souls . . . Holding the open phial in my hand, I walk about like a bird-catcher, oblivious of the effort required to attract my prey.' When he returned home he filtered off the solution, and what remained was logically the captured emanation. He placed it under the microscope and looked at it with a painful sadness.

> Poor Gringoir! That brain machine which in my youth awoke my lively sympathy for the suffering poet who knew how to win the love of a beautiful young girl, was this brain machine really composed of these little crystals? Honest, decent Boulay, is it really you I have caught in my fly-trap? Or you, d'Urville, who took me on my first journey into the world during the long winter evenings under faraway Sweden's northern light? . . . Instead of an answer I pour out a drop of acid on to the microscope slide. It swells out, this dead matter, makes convulsive movements, begins to live, breathes out a putrid smell, quietens down and dies. It is true. I can awaken the dead, but I will not

do it again. They have bad breath, the dead, like libertines after a night of debauch . . .*

The next stage was the ancient dream of alchemy—the manufacture of gold. 'I took as my point of departure the following question; why does sulphate of iron in a solution of chloroaurate of sodium precipitate metallic gold? The answer came out as follows: because iron and sulphur are included in the composition of gold.'†

To prove this [my father relates], a professor at the Sorbonne lent him a laboratory; he used to bring me watch-glasses covered with gold dust and showed them to me, gloating with pride. He was also very much concerned with astronomy. For these experiments my house was particularly suitable, since there was a small pent-house on the roof with windows facing in all four directions. This part of his researches, however, I did not quite understand. Maybe now that he has all the necessary equipment, he is able to carry them further. This mysterious experiment was conducted as follows: in the pent-house on the roof he stood a wash basin filled with clear water. At night it reflected very clearly the face of the moon. But he wanted to achieve that the moon's face would be visible not only at the normal and correct angle of reflection, but from all sides. This last marvel, however, never happened and Strindberg finally returned home to his country.

Who knows what he wanted to prove with this wash basin and the moon? Maybe Father has omitted some important detail. The story seems credible enough after the attempts to catch spirits in a bottle. Strindberg's experiments might have remained a mere vagary of mental derangement had he not publicized them with such stubbornness in scientific circles. Some laughed at him maliciously, others took him seriously, which was even worse because it encouraged further aberrations. He was not

* *Sylva Sylvarum.*

† *Inferno*, pp. 50–1.

alone in his mock-scientific attempts. Even Delius, another boarder at Madame Charlotte's, published with Papus *The Anatomy and Physiology of the Orchestra*, subtitled 'An Occult Treatise of Musical Science'. 'Occultism,' wrote the *Revue des Revues* on 15 May 1894, 'not only has some fifty reviews and journals, and its own library, but also its photographers and a painter of talent (M. James Tissot) for whom spirits pose.'

Gauguin was no stranger to these practices either. They all got involved somehow, so that in the eyes of his contemporaries, Strindberg's extravagances were not particularly astonishing. They certainly did not think him mad, otherwise Gauguin, who was just preparing his last exhibition, would have not asked him to write an introduction to the catalogue. Strindberg thought very highly of him as a man, he even admitted he was something of a genius, but instead of the introduction he sent him a letter:

> I cannot understand your art and I cannot like it . . . Gauguin, the savage, hating restrictive civilization, something of Titan, who jealous of the Creator . . . makes his own small creation, the child who takes his toys to bits to make others, who denies and defies, preferring to see the sky red rather than blue like the rest of us . . .

Gauguin, however, published the letter in the catalogue, and both reaped the vicious mockery of the Press.

After this, Gauguin, disappointed by Paris, robbed by Anna and embittered by the failure of the exhibition, left France, never to return.

> I think [he wrote from Tahiti], that everything has been said about me which ought and ought not to be said. I want one thing only, *silence*, *silence* and again silence. Let me die in peace, *forgotten*, and if I must live, leave me more peaceful and forgotten still. What does it matter whether I was Bernard's or

Sérusier's pupil? If I have done fine things, nothing will tarnish them . . . in any case, society will not be able to reproach me with having taken much money from its pocket by lies.*

Nine years later, on 8 May 1903, he was found dead by his old Tahitian neighbour, who gnawed his skull to make sure there was no life left in him.

Strindberg, despite his growing suspicions of the 'circle of artists' there, still ate his meals at Madame Charlotte's. She helped him with credit whenever he was in financial difficulties, probably fell in love with him and certainly gave him that maternal affection which he craved. In his play that takes place at the *crémerie*, entitled *There are Crimes and Crimes*, he called her Mme Cathérine, gave her the role of a kindly guardian angel, described himself as Maurice the playwright and Father probably as Adolphe, his artist friend. The stage directions give a precise description of the place:

Right a buffet on which stands an aquarium containing goldfish, a palm, vegetables, fruit, preserves. Back, a door to the kitchen with a further door to the garden. Left, a raised counter and shelves holding many bottles. Down right a long marble-topped table against the wall and another, parallel with it. The walls are covered with paintings.†

With his financial worries Strindberg's mental state grew worse. He was convinced that dark forces were spreading their toils around him, to destroy him either by sin or madness. Once he only just escaped the tempter by a hair's breadth when he made the acquaintance of a young English sculptress—probably Henriette of the play —at Madame Charlotte's; he was consumed with longing

* *Gauguin* by Henri Perruchot, translated by Humphrey Hare. London, Perpetua, 1963.

† *There are Crimes and Crimes* from *Twelve Plays of August Strindberg*, translated by Elizabeth Sprigge. London, Constable, 1963.

for her, but at a critical moment a model by the name of Minna appeared, embraced and kissed him in a friendly way, whereupon the English lady took offence, settled her bill and left. 'No more love,' wrote Strindberg. 'The Powers had given the word of command and I was resigned, well aware that a special Providence lay behind this, as behind everything else.'*

Back in his small private hotel the dark forces found him once more. Somebody in the room overhead kept walking around. A waitress gave him hostile looks. Three pianos started playing simultaneously. When he tried to sleep, he was woken up by a terrible noise. 'Someone was hammering a nail in the next room alongside my bed. After that somebody began to hammer on the other side too. Quite clearly a conspiracy, just about as stupid as those female pianists themselves.'†

Gradually the attacks became even more refined.

> My friends at the crémerie are persecuting me. When I last ate dinner there, it was served in the yard because of the heat. The table was placed between the rubbish-bin and the conveniences. Over the rubbish-bin was the picture of the crucified woman by my former friend the American, hung there as a revenge because he had gone off without paying what he owed. Near the table the Russians had set up a statuette of a warrior armed with a sickle, their national emblem. To scare me, of course. A young gutter-snipe, who lives in the house, went to the closet at my rear with the evident intention of annoying me . . . The cocottes . . . had opened their windows and were raining indecent remarks upon our heads. Servants came out with buckets and emptied garbage into the rubbish-bin. It was Hell let loose . . . I absolved them on the ground that they were merely demons performing their duty.‡

He was now living in such utter misery that his fellow-

* *Inferno*, p. 39. † Ibid., p. 48. ‡ Ibid., pp. 78–9.

countrymen had begun to collect money to enable him to return to Stockholm. He moved to a wretched, freezing room at the Hôtel Orfila which he never heated. He had an iron bed, a table full of papers, instruments and bottles. The only window, situated above the outdoor convenience, looked out over the courtyard of a convent and the backs of houses where more closets were ranged in rows before him. This looked like another conspiracy. He was pale; his eyes, bloodshot from lack of sleep, darted suspiciously, following the gestures of the person he talked to. 'Do you hear,' says Maurice, Strindberg's idealized portrait of himself, to Henriette in *There are Crimes and Crimes*, 'that distant murmur like waves on a pebbly beach, like the wind in the woods? Do you know what that is? It is Paris whispering my name!' His conquest of Paris was ending in an unheated room surrounded by conveniences, with charity money collected to pay for his journey home. 'The great infatuation,' wrote Ginisty, his former admirer in *The Nineteenth Century*, 'inspired by Scandinavian literature is dying down, and now that the curiosity has been satiated, a reaction is setting in against the Scandinavians . . . who were for two years virtually our tyrants.' And *Figaro* published the following brief report: 'A few Scandinavian writers and artists living in Paris have appealed to their compatriots for the necessary funds to repatriate this Swedish author of whom the papers were so full only recently. There is something sad about it all!'

It seemed that the forces of darkness had prevailed. 'What?' cried Strindberg in desperation. 'Is man doomed to wear forever this bulk of flesh and skin, with its five holes, five orifices connecting him with the great sewer . . . ?'*

* *Sylva Sylvarum.*

Then came the inevitable escape into the arms of the only remaining Mother.

'A friend asked me,' he wrote at the end of *Inferno*, 'What is our goal?'

'To him I said, "I cannot tell you, but for me personally it seems that the way of the Cross is leading me back to *the faith of my forefathers*." '

'Catholicism?'

'It seems so . . . the Mother Church.'*

* *Inferno*, p. 170.

14

THANKS to the enormous success of the play, the head of 'La Princesse Lointaine', with its wreath of lilies, became a sort of Sarah Bernhardt trade mark and began to appear in countless variations in jewellery and ornamentation. A special edition of the designs from various scenes was quickly sold out. This encouraged an enterprising publisher, Piazza, to publish the Rostand play in an expensive edition, with Mucha drawings. Only one such book had so far been published—the *Legend of the Four Sons of Aimon*, executed by Grasset. Piazza wanted something modern, the last word in Art Nouveau.

Father once more found himself in Grasset's footsteps. His *Gismonda* had been compared with Grasset's poster for *Joan of Arc*, the only work of quality Sarah had previously to show. Now the critics had the opportunity of speaking in the same breath of two books similar in style. This gave rise to the optical illusion that Mucha derived his style from Grasset, whom he greatly respected. Also the French critics intentionally paid special tribute to Grasset, a native of Lausanne, who acquired French nationality. Grasset was presented as the original and Mucha the derivative. This, of course, is incorrect. The relation of the two artists was roughly the same as Puvis de Chavannes and Gauguin. With his stylized floral designs and imitation of stained-glass-window technique, Grasset opened up numerous avenues for the younger generation,

but was himself incapable of creating in the new spirit. The beauty of utility and the possibility of using the decorative qualities of the new materials were alien to him. He sought merely to compromise with what he called the unavoidable ugliness of the new age, suggesting for instance, that electric wires should be camouflaged with glass beads. Mucha, on the other hand, belonged to the generation which looked to Grasset as its doyen and listened to his pronouncements, but went in a different direction. Even Chéret cannot properly be counted as belonging to them. If we accept as the criterion of Art Nouveau the use of new decorative elements derived directly from nature, then Chéret, who operated with fiery colours and naturalistic figures whirling in a vacuum, does not, strictly speaking, belong to it. Art Nouveau does not stand for the *fin de siècle*. Having established the terms, we had better stick to the rules.

One day, Piazza sent word [wrote Father] that he would like to see me. Why not, I said, we can certainly talk. When I met him, he told me that he wanted to publish *La Princesse Lointaine* in book-form and would I do the illustrations? I imagined that I would do what I had done on the stage and add a little more. I agreed, but insisted we must first obtain Rostand's consent.

In the evening I went to the theatre. Rostand, who went to every performance, was also there, so we discussed the matter in Sarah's dressing-room. I took him aside and told him what Piazza wanted. Rostand thought it over and after a while said that he would have no objections, but that the publisher must pay him 10,000 francs [£400] for the rights. This seemed to me a rather high figure and I was somewhat put out. Nevertheless I told him I would inform the publisher, and we would see what could be done.

The following day Piazza came and asked me what I had arranged. When he heard Rostand's price, his face fell. He could

not, he said, invest that sort of money in the book and we should have to drop the whole idea.

A few days later he turned up again. He came to me, accompanied by a writer named de Flers who, as he told me, had written something similar to *La Princesse Lointaine*, and Piazza wanted to publish it under the title *Ilsée*. De Flers evidently agreed, and it was up to me.

The situation was in fact much worse. Piazza had drawn up a contract with Father before he made sure of Rostand. When he heard the terms, the work was already under way, and Piazza chose de Flers, the author of popular bedroom comedies, to write a new text.

'I told him I would not discuss the matter with Rostand any more. I was prepared to do the illustrations, but only if Rostand agreed.'

There was nothing for Rostand to agree or disagree about. The legend about the troubadour Joufres Rudels de Blaja had been written in Provencal in the thirteenth century and its historical basis was public domain. In the small town of Blaja—today known as Blay, near Bordeaux —Joufres Rudels was born somewhere between 1120 and 1125 and, according to the legend, 'heard so many good things about the Princess of Tripoli from pilgrims coming from Antioch that he fell in love with her from a distance'. This princess was evidently the daughter of Count Raymund I, who was murdered in 1152, leaving the twelve-year-old Raymund II and a younger daughter, Mélisande. When Mélisande was about sixteen, Balduin III, King of Jerusalem, gave her in marriage to the Emperor of Byzantium, Manuel—the Crusaders were apparently looking after each other well—but, as she fell ill, the wedding fixed for 1160 did not take place. The rest is legend, out of which Rostand created a sexy pre-Raphaelite romance and de Flers a symbolic fantasy.

Ilsée was published in due course but before de Flers delivered his manuscript, a great deal of precious time had elapsed. Sarah had left meanwhile on her fifth tour of the United States and was not due to return until June the following year. The theatre carried on without her. On 5 November 1895, Maurice Donnay opened his most successful play, *Les Amants* with a poster by Mucha totally different from those for Sarah. It was not vertical but horizontal, with a multitude of figures, none of which was predominant—in other words, the court without the queen, or when the cat's away . . . Guitry, who played the leading role with Jeanne Granier, stands to one side, as though allowing, with a mixture of reluctance and amusement, the fun to go on.

With Sarah's absence Mucha was partially freed from his duties in the theatre, but meanwhile other work now kept him busy from early in the morning till late at night. Shortly after his success with *Gismonda* he received a visit from Champenois who, following the court case with Lemercier, was due to take over Sarah's orders.

> He told me he liked the *Gismonda* poster and would like me to do some work for him. 'All right,' I said, 'I will.' And our collaboration which lasted until my departure for America began. First I drew for him a calendar—a girl in profile, with a diadem and the zodiac around her head. It had both deserved and undeserved success, being bought by the magazine *La Plume* for a calendar, and finally it was sold without a title as a lithograph for people to frame and hang on their walls. Champenois thought the head was Sarah's, but I had no model, I just drew a girl more or less from memory, arranging her so as to be able to make the most of her hair. Then Champenois wanted me to do various other things for him; I did the panneaux representing the four seasons of the year. These were well received, and I was glad that I was engaged on art for the people and not for the

closed salons. It was cheap, within everybody's means, and found its way into both well-to-do and poor families. I was not aspiring to reach the rich with my work, I wanted to get near to the people.

While Father saw only his idealist motives, Champenois arranged the commercial side realistically and entirely to his own advantage. He gave Mucha a contract to sign which effectively made him his exclusive property, prohibiting him from working for other European firms and binding him, in return for a regular salary, to fulfil all obligations that Champenois obtained for him. Father allowed himself to be overwhelmed by the amount of money offered—a minimum of 30,000 francs a year—and did not realize what slavery was awaiting him. Right till the end of his life he had a completely unrealistic conception of what he was physically able to do. Whenever he accepted an order, he was convinced that he would master it in a few weeks, although he regularly miscalculated by months, and even years. The ease with which he drew and solved problems of composition misled him into making faulty estimates, causing orders to heap up so that he had to work for nights on end to meet his deadlines. In spite of working under pressure and strain, he rarely handed in work that was not up to the required level. It can be seen from his originals that it was the fault of the lithographers if some prints were below standard. This happened usually when for lack of time the proofs were not submitted to him for correction.

Now that he had signed a contract with Champenois, he had four different jobs, each of which was enough for a full-time occupation. He had to continue with the illustrations for Seignobos's History of Germany and prepare for a History of Spain, there was *Ilsée*, there was

Champenois, and at the same time there was Sarah and the many hours a week at the theatre. Success also involved him in a wealth of new social obligations which he never learned how to limit. In fact his private life dwindled down to a few hours of sleep.

About the same time, in 1895, he met a group of artists gathered around the magazine *La Plume*, strongly in favour of the Art Nouveau movement. He was introduced by a minor poet called Canqueteau, another member of the Mme Charlotte set, who one day brought Léon Deschamps, the editor of *La Plume*, to his studio.

> At the back of a courtyard in the rue de la Grande Chaumière [Deschamps described his visit], we climbed up to the second floor. We knocked, a door opened, and we were let into a small studio cluttered up with brocades, ecclesiastical garments, easels displaying pastel sketches and furnished with quaint oriental furniture. On every chair and every table there were cigarettes and packets of miniature cigars . . .
>
> His hands held out to us, a young man with fair hair rushed to meet us. His gaze soft and bold, his voice inflecting the words of our language with a strange and somewhat exotic rhythm, the frankness of his welcome, straightforward and smiling—everything about the man welcoming us tended to make us like him . . .
>
> In a corner of the studio a sheet with a sketch attracted our attention: it was a half-nude woman, her inclined head resting nonchalantly on one hand, her golden hair curling like a halo in rich arabesques—those famous 'macaroni' which tomorrow would be celebrated and copied by all the monkeys of art—a divine languor lingering over the clean outlines of her face, the whole emanating an indefinable charm . . .*
>
> We looked closely at Mucha. His hair, fairly long, made a pleasant wave above his forehead. Few nonchalant gestures, occasionally the thoughtful stroking of the beard, which is thick and cut to half length with scissors. His clothes: grey trousers and a black silk shirt, embroidered and buttoned on the shoulder

* Draft of the poster for the Salon des Cent.

—his only luxury and the main item in his working outfit; for Mucha heats his studio to a temperature that would be unbearable for us French but which allows him to be lightly dressed and gives him greater freedom when working on his large compositions, stained glass windows or posters. One is conscious of the basic goodness of his character, an excessive goodness which cannot say no and which will therefore play him more than one bad trick. No affectation at all, and such modesty, such extraordinary simplicity—quite unexpected today in an artist who has found success so young and so fully.

Eight years had passed since that raw autumn day when with Mašek he first stepped out of the Gare de l'Est. The higher powers—so different from those ensnaring Strindberg—had kept their word.

The rue de la Grande Chaumière had now served its purpose. When de Flers completed his manuscript, there were only three months left before *Ilsée* was due to be published and Mucha had to draw and prepare for the press 134 coloured lithographs. There was no time for rushing to the printing works and back to the studio. This meant moving to a larger place and having part of the lithographic work done on the spot.

We worked on four stones simultaneously. I did some of the drawings straight on to the stone; other things, particularly the decorative edgings, I drew on tracing paper which was then passed on to the draughtsmen who continued the work with the colours that I specified. I hardly had time to sketch out the motif for an ornament when they came and took it from my hands and got down to work on it. It was quite impossible for me to do everything myself if the work was to be ready in three months' time. I would draw one dragon-fly and they multiplied it into a whole band. As a result the ornamentation lacks the crisp finish it would have had if I had been able to do it all

myself. I drew without a model; everything had to go quickly, from memory, even the most complicated compositions had to be done without models.

The book came out in 252 numbered copies, one of which was on parchment, one on silk, 15 on Japanese paper and 35 on rice paper. The critics gave it an enthusiastic reception. One, named Saint Claire, went so far as to deal with each page separately. 'Through a forest, suddenly miraculous,' he described page 26, 'with branches interweaving, intertwining and massing, to form wondrous harps, swoons a spectre, light, fragile and diaphanous, leaving the azure trains of its veil in the melodious hands of Poetry and Music.' What an opportunity for the Symbolists to improvise their sophisticated variations! Page 41: 'A greedy, corpulent prior, with two angels kneeling in front of him and roasting a bird on a spit. Two cocks, serving as caryatids, bear a girdle strewn with crosses.' Here, and in many other motifs, Mucha's decorative fantasies bordered on the bizarre visions of Hieronymus Bosch and the surrealistic imagery of Dali. The resulting arabesque formed such a homogeneous whole that only closer scrutiny unravels the strange elements composing it: an eye, pierced by a thorn and oozing out large drops of blood, an eagle's claw, a dragon's jaws, a vulture sitting in a nest on a human heart. Mainly the eye fascinated him—a single, isolated eye, staring intently, repeated like a phantasmic decorative motif, disturbing, omnipresent. He used it even in such profane subjects as the poster for Cassan Fils Printing Works in Toulouse. This was no longer mere symbolism, but an esoteric conversation in signs and symbols with his mystical confederates everywhere.

Ilsée was his last work in the rue de la Grande Chaumière

and the first in the new studio which Piazza had found for him at No. 6, rue du Val de Grâce, at the upper end of the Boulevard St Michel. He moved there in the summer of 1896. Instead of the suitcase from Mikulov, the single suit, the few collars and two pairs of shoes, he now had draperies, carpets, oriental lamps, carved statues, old weapons and antique furniture of all ages. Everything went down into the removal van, once again before the eyes of the whole street. It looked more like moving a small touring theatre company than a painter. Madame Charlotte stood in front of her *crémerie*, looking on in silence. She was accustomed to her children forsaking the old street one after the other as they grew up and moved into another world. The little restaurant was already buzzing with new, young voices. The ones who left had to learn to get on without her help. Gauguin, Strindberg, Wispianski, Delius, Durrio, Sérusier, Denis . . . Each had left something behind, each had taken something away. Now the last one, who had stayed longest, was on the move. He only went across the Jardin du Luxembourg, but for Madame Charlotte this was the same as going to Tahiti.

A new century came, two world wars, streets changed their character, and Madame Charlotte's *crémerie* has long since disappeared. Time has removed it into fairyland, next to the gingerbread cottage of Hänsel and Gretel and the house of the seven dwarfs. One day, as I was looking through a pile of old correspondence, I found a letter written in bad French and signed with a name I did not know: Widow Caron, *née* Futterer. It was dated: Ingvilles, 15 October 1921.

Dear Friend Mucha,

I got your good letter and what joy and pleasure it brought me to know of your success, surrounded by your family, your good wife and your dear children. So you will understand the suffering of a mother what had sacrificed herself so much to bring up her only child. Because two countries couldn't understand each other or didn't want to understand each other. In spite of my misfortunes, how proud and happy I am of the success of my dear artists . . . Mr Slewinski and his wife meant to come and see me that autumn when war started, and I might have seen him before he died. He had sold me the big picture with Hellmonski's horses and was going to bring me another instead, because this picture of the horses came from his cousin. I would have been so glad for him to see me so well set up with all these pictures around me, because you know that if anybody had asked me to go and *bring down the moon for him in my teeth, which is something impossible*, I would have tried . . . All the great men who came to Noyon from Germany visited my gallery, what a pity. You mustn't think I want to boast, you know I'm a simple woman and so was my dear Louis simple, him as was always not proud at all. He always said how lucky we were; after his death with the sacred vow I made to him, all the pictures bought or given would return in three parts to Alsace, one part to France and the other to Sweden because Mr Strindberg did so much. And all them lovely letters. Six weeks before he died he wrote me again and the glory of all my great artists and poets, because all the newspapers in all the countries of the world knew about me. We were one time twenty-four people and nineteen from different nations. I went to the Swedish Embassy but me not being a Swedish subject they couldn't take on my affair because France and Germany would be *angry* about it . . . I want to tell you the Germans who saw my gallery at Noyon because the history of the crémerie is on sale in Germany at all the big bookshops, it's a book by Strindberg. Prince Eitel, the Kaiser's second son, he wanted to buy it from me, I offered him a study of a woman which he liked. The adjutant of the Crown Prince, Mr Kummer, his grandfather fought for Metz in 70. The brother of the king of Rumania. The Comte de Bary, a Huguenot. All of

them felt sorry for me because at that time I did not know my son was dead. I had even all the right to say that my affairs must be respected, because I was protégé of His Majesty. Dear Mucha, I had my bust life-size made by a German born at Düsseldorf, Hoetger, signed mother of the artists, after you left the crémerie . . . When I left Noyon at my expense they let me take the beautiful Gauguin picture of the two Tahiti women and also the portrait of Strindberg done by Mr Slewinski. The Gauguin was exhibited at Berlin and Vienna. From America they offer me sixty thousand frs but Mr Slewinski he recommended me never to sell it because between you and me it is worth 100 thousand. You know that Baker, once a time War Minister for the America, I also had two canvases went to him. It looks if . . . my Gauguin which I have . . . is the only beautiful one still to sell. I had from Gauguin a saucer and 5 pretty wood engravings which stayed at Noyon and *also* disappear. I am looking for great sculptor Hoetger born at Düsseldorf . . . who made my bust . . . and of my Louis as Artilleryman which I was picking up blown to bits under cannon's fire when I was leaving Noyon . . . The panels and even the carrier pigeons which you did for me for the crémerie in Paris stayed at Noyon full of bullet holes at the walls and I want to take them away one of these days . . . Now I end, please excuse my long letter . . . and be sure that far away you have somebody who wishes you well with all her heart and wants you to be able to bear with patience and courage the miseries of this wretched world.

Under her signature, Widow Caron *née* Futterer, she had added the words: 'Adieu tout-monde, je vous laisse.'

15

MUCHA fixed up his new studio with Byzantine luxury. The tall, bare walls were covered with huge Chinese draperies of dark red silk, flowing from the ceiling like a heavy canopy; one end of the room was hung with pieces of richly-ornamented Turkish tent-cloth; the entrance was adorned with strips of Tibetan and Japanese embroidery; the floor was covered with Persian carpets and bear-skins; the furniture was Renaissance, baroque and Empire; there were palms ten feet high, musical instruments, stuffed birds, oriental vases, medieval statuary, church lamps, chasubles, candlesticks, ancient books, weapons, helmets and countless smaller items. To ensure that he had fresh flowers every day, he had hampers of carnations, roses, mimosa, irises or peonies sent from Nice all the year round.

The studio occupied the top half of a barn-like structure built in the courtyard garden of a house the rear part of which, designed by Mansard, had once been a private hotel for a mistress of Louis XIV, the lame La Valière. Father had his apartment there, taking up the whole right wing of La Valière's residence which was linked to the studio by a narrow passage. Besides several bedrooms, a drawing-room and a dining-room, there was a large kitchen, and Father could at last stop taking his meals in restaurants. He engaged Louise, an old, motherly French cook, who stayed with him for the next twenty years and

went with him wherever he moved as part of the inventory, together with his furniture, draperies and bear-skins. He even took on an English footman to make sure that his style of living was in accordance with his new social status.

The core of his new circle of friends consisted of his neighbours. The ground-floor studio was occupied by Seysses, a mediocre but successful sculptor, who was related to one of the members of the government and managed to obtain through him lucrative orders for the embellishment of public buildings which in those days swarmed with angels and allegorical groups, like Indian temples of the Thousand Gods. When towards 1900 Father took up sculpture, he did most of his work in Seysses's studio, as there could be no question of handling clay among all the Persian rugs and palm trees upstairs. Seysses was not only responsible for his modelling. Through him Father met a number of influential politicians who became his friends, like the prominent socialist leader, Viviani, or Dosset, the Lord Mayor of Paris, people who deeply influenced his up to then rather vague political views. It was at the time when the government was plunged in the Dreyfus Affair, a crisis which was to split French public life into two embittered camps for years to come. Dreyfus, a Jewish army officer, was arrested in October 1894, accused of spying for Germany, publicly degraded on 5 January 1895 and sentenced to penal servitude on Devil's Island where he remained until the revision of his case in 1899. But even then, it took the Dreyfusards, led by Zola, Clémenceau and Marshal Lyautey, three more years to obtain his final rehabilitation in July 1902. The Dreyfus Affair was in fact a desperate struggle by all the progressive elements in France against the extreme Right, which, under a smoke-screen of

chauvinism, threatened the basic freedoms of the republican regime.

The household which Mucha had moved into was a bastion of militant Dreyfusards. The Vicomte de Marsac, Ary Renan, Seysses, the sculptress Mlle Siamour, were all passionately involved against the generals and Déroulède, so that the new studio, instead of being a rallying point for Art Nouveau, became a meeting place for socialists, Garibaldists and revolutionaries on the run from all parts of Europe. A strange mixture, considering that the house was also filled with Rosicrucians, Spiritualists and Mystics.

Father moved to 6 rue du Val de Grâce on the eve of Sarah Bernhardt's return from America and, with the work on *Ilsée* still going on, started preparing for the new season of the Théâtre de la Renaissance. It was to open in September with a revival of *La Dame aux Camélias*, the famous play by Dumas *fils*, which inspired one of Father's finest posters. He worked with Sarah on the whole production and shortly after the first night, on 30 September, they began rehearsing the next play, *Lorenzaccio* by Alfred de Musset, arranged by Armand d'Artois. The poster for it is probably the most popular of all, Sarah in her chocolate page's costume on a background of golden filigree, and can be found decorating theatrical establishments all over the world from the Actor's Studio in New York to the former Baty Theatre in Paris. This was the heyday of the artistic poster. Every morning brought a new, exciting surprise and the Press carried regular reports on the latest events at the Street Gallery. The *Journal des Débats* even expressed regret that the Opéra Comique building had been completed, since it meant the end of the hoardings round the building site, artistically more attractive to the writer than the opera itself.

Admirers of Japanese art maintain that the illustrated poster was born in 1729, when the first live elephant was brought to Kyoto and bills with pictures of the remarkable beast were displayed all over the town, inviting the public to come and admire it. Whatever its origin, the poster first became a work of art in Paris, and perhaps only in Paris. They were produced everywhere, but even the best ones seem somewhat cramped; there is always something missing—perhaps the freedom of improvisation in a style which was Paris's own, while abroad all the Jugendstils and Secessions had a militant and rather impetuous character.

Shortly after the première of *Lorenzaccio*, Henry Bauer arranged a gala for Sarah Bernhardt at the Grand Hotel, a dinner party given by her admirers, which was to be the apotheosis of the now fifty-year-old queen of the stage. Five hundred celebrities from the arts and society were present, and when Bernhardt with perfect timing appeared on top of the wide marble staircase in a white dress with English lace, embroidered in gold and edged in chinchilla, the crowd greeted her with delirious applause. Slowly, with her special ethereal majesty, she came down the marble steps, stopped, leaned with one hand on the pillar and with the other waved to the ecstatic sea of stiff collars, white ties and beards. Each intimate collaborator came up with his hand-made present, like children, who have learned to recite a poem or play a piano piece for Granny's birthday. Coppé, Catulle Mendès, Rostand and André Theuriet declaimed panegyrical sonnets, Sardou proposed an overwhelming toast spiced with anecdotes, and the orchestra, under the baton of Edouard Colonne, played the 'Hymn to Sarah Bernhardt' composed by Gabriel Pierné to words by Armand Sylvestre. The menu,

designed by Mucha, showed Sarah languorously caressing two young girls, offering her dishes of fruit, and the dinner consisted of oysters, hors d'œuvres, cold trout, cutlets, roast chicken, pheasant garnished with partridges and truffles, *pâté de foie gras*, *gateau Sarah* and ice cream.

> 'Vous la Déesse des temples profanes,
> Mélodieuse Muse eurythmique charité . . .'

sang Catulle Mendès, while Rostand sighed: 'En ce temps sans beauté, seule, tu nous restes . . .' Among those present, chipping in with the Chambertin 1884, were the Princess of Monaco, Charpentier the composer, Lady Asquith, Alphonse Daudet, Baron Rothschild, Feydeau the playwright, Reynaldo Hahn, Mme Brandès the actress, Lalique, Pierre Loti, the famous Robert de Montesquiou, Nadar the photographer, Poincaré, Waldeck-Rousseau and, of course, the hard core of Bernhardt's inner circle, beginning with Louise Abbéma, who had drawn several shattering allegories for the occasion, and ending with Clairin, who disgraced himself with a drawing in even worse taste. Feats of rhetoric and toasts continued long after the champagne. Everyone was thrilled and when the guests finally drove off through the night streets of Paris and the clatter of countless carriages dispersed in all directions, they lit their last cigars, profoundly satisfied with themselves and the unforgettable, inspiring evening; another pleasure we can appreciate no more than the chance glimpse of a young lady's ankle.

With the New Year, 1897, the time came for Mucha to show the public the results of his work. His first, limited exhibition was held in February at the small but well-

known Bodinière in the rue St Lazare, the second, much larger one at the Salon des Cent in the rue Bonaparte, lasting from 24 May until July. The fortnightly *La Plume* issued for the occasion a hundred-page special number, devoted to Mucha, which contained besides countless illustrations most of the important articles written about him to date in Paris.

Anxious to take full advantage of Mucha's connection with Bernhardt, the managers of the Bodinière kept pressing him to get her to write an introduction to the catalogue. Such a thing was utterly alien to Father's character and yet he was quite incapable of refusing any demand. As usual, he resolved the difficulty by what he considered to be a reasonable compromise. He wrote to Sarah, who happened to like exchanging written messages, that he was planning an exhibition, and did she think it necessary for her to present him to the public? She replied:

> Mon bien cher Mucha,
>
> You ask me to present you to the Parisian public. Well, my dear friend, follow my advice: exhibit your works, they will speak for you, I know my dear Parisian public. The delicacy of your drawing, the originality of your compositions, the lovely colours of your posters and pictures—all this will charm them, and after your exhibition I predict fame for you.
>
> My two hands in yours, my dear Mucha,
>
> Sarah Bernhardt.

The gallery was satisfied and published the letter in the catalogue, but Sarah proved to be right. The exhibition aroused sufficient interest, even without her intervention, and the majority of the critics referred to her only in connection with the posters for the Théâtre de la Renaissance. 'Mucha is hard-working and truly inspired,' wrote the newspapers. 'One cannot describe his works, they

must be seen.' 'Mucha is in the process of conquering Paris.' 'Mucha has come to be one of our best masters of the poster.' 'Bewitching inventor of ideas and decorative shapes.' 'Rising to the ranks of the contemporary masters.'

While the exhibition at La Bodinière contained only some of his posters and illustrations, the Salon des Cent at No. 31 rue Bonaparte, showed 448 of his works, including 52 of the best posters, 9 calendars, 13 dust jackets, 10 menus and programmes, 13 panels, 6 stained glass window designs, 19 historical illustrations and more than 50 *genre* subjects. In addition, there were 258 originals for *Ilsée*, and a further 13 various compositions and portraits. More than two-thirds of all works exhibited had been done in the last two years.

The summer exhibitions confirmed final victory over the fickle Parisian public. With the exception of a few critics, who could not refrain from voicing their anti-Dreyfusard and chauvinistic attitudes, the papers were full of praise, but nearly all of them stubbornly repeated the legend of Mucha's Hungarian origin. Not quite all, because one critic, Pallier, wrote in the *Liberté*: 'We know Mucha to be of Spanish origin, and the Spanish school of the present day is the only one to have preserved the tradition of its noble and instructive historical compositions . . . In taking his inspiration from Pradilla and Vierge, the young artist is following the best of examples.' Among those who kept to the classical Hungarian version, a confrère of Pallier reached a particularly interesting conclusion: 'All the works of Hungarian painters show an unmistakable similarity, due to their Tartar origin: a need to exteriorize cruelty.'

Beseda, the society of Slav artists in Paris, of which Mucha had been president ever since its fusion with Lada,

protested but in vain. The legend of the Hungarian origin has persisted to this day and it will presumably live as long as authors rely on information contained in the contemporary Press.

'But why destroy the legend about Sarah abducting Mucha from a gipsy camp in the *puszta*?' objected Henri Degron in *La Plume*.

> We live in a nasty, sordid atmosphere of reality, we see around us so much moral degradation . . . that we should be glad to hear now and again . . . that a whiff of legend, heroic or tender . . . has driven the early inspiration of an artist . . . A legend . . . is like the fire of dawn before the full light of day; without it there cannot be great men or history.

Later in an article entitled, 'Poetry in the Work of Alphonse Mucha', Degron gave his imagination even more rein:

> To penetrate us and give us the whole range of emotions, Mucha uses the woman . . . a woman as we know her . . . whose kisses caress or wound us, whose dress with its mysterious folds spreads out or gathers up at the will of the capricious lover . . . He is not a realist or mystic; no impressionism of doubtful standard impregnates his work. He is a poet who knows better than anyone else how to glorify the real woman with her moistened hungry lips.

The author's fantasy has created yet another legend, just as unreal as the typically Spanish or Hungarian characteristics. Mucha was wary of women; he mistrusted them no less than Strindberg, except that he made his messengers of Hell the impersonal bearers of heavenly beauty. 'If any woman comes near you,' he used to advise me, 'kick her!' Such a remarkable dichotomy could only derive from a profound knowledge of the subject.

But after all, what does the artist's real intention matter?

More important is what every generation thinks it sees in his work. Degron, to quote him once more, found most attractive, besides the posters, the panneau 'Summer' designed in 1895 for Champenois.

> The sun's rays have grown hotter, making the atmosphere heavy; the sullen immobility of the afternoon is drowsy and the air burns breathless. The water of the pond has fallen asleep, no dragon-fly ripples its surface, only the reeds gently bow their pensive heads over the water, casting shadows. The Queen of the Summer seated on the deserted bank has let her head sink on her weary arm and sleep has come to surprise her gently, while at her feet the water of the pool sleeps silent . . .

This was perfect symbolism, exactly what people wanted. They projected into pictures their own imagery and loved works that enabled them to improvise on a given theme. 'Mucha seems to be one of the few who have consciously joined *their particular epoch*,' wrote Paul Redonnel in *La Plume*. This is very true. His entire attitude towards art perfectly matched the requirements of his time at the very moment when he reached full maturity. Had he been born ten years sooner or later, he would have irretrievably missed the mark and the loss would have been on both sides.

Needless to say, the figure Degron described was no Queen of the Summer sleeping in her great solitude, but a rather realistic evocation of the Moravian summer, with a girl sitting in her typical manner, her head garlanded with wild poppies, her feet dangling in the pool, half dreaming, half thinking with voluptuous languor of the lads who are coming down to water their horses. Few of Mucha's panneaux are so truly Southern Moravian, so close to the slow love-songs of those parts sung by the village girls in peculiar harmonic intervals, exploited with

such success by Janáček. Compared with the other three Seasons, Summer is the most authentic and simple and probably also the most effective.

The arabesque, the curves of undulating hair, the use of ornament to fill up space—all this derived from Mucha's dislike of emptiness, from his need to articulate, divide up and, at the same time, to harmonize an area. I often watched him work, filling a given space with shapes. He began by breaking up the area with the principal design. Then he would immediately fill the vacant areas with more lines, at first only with a few so as not to upset the balance, then more and more, developing them simultaneously until the whole was a harmonious pattern of curves and arabesques. He never had a preconceived plan and never concentrated on a single area of the picture. His hand moved firmly over the paper, every new line leading logically to others out of a simple sense of balance. Truly, no one could join as easily and deftly his particular epoch, no one provoked the fantasy of the public to such unbelievable contortions. With such a wealth of invention the whole world might have been changed into one great, swelling wave of curves and loops. 'Why,' cried Paul Redonnel, 'since the epoch is set to realize all our desires, to master all phenomena and make them serve our purpose, why, we say, should not some great industrialist go along to see Mucha, to ask him to design a proper shape for automobile vehicles?'

Yes, why didn't this happen? The world might have been the richer for a Hieronymus Bosch fantasy on wheels.

16

There was one artist [wrote J. Hayden-Clarendon, in the *New York Daily News* of 3 April 1904] who, though at the time only on the threshold of greatness, created more sensation as he stalked up the Boulevard St Michel than did any of his better-known confrères. Alphonse Mucha . . . had electrified Paris —and, indeed, the whole of France—with his wonderful work . . . His name was on every wall and in every mouth. He was sought after by every salon, and lionized wherever he chanced to go.

This was all probably very true, but the main feature of his life since he moved to the rue du Val de Grâce was work—more hard work than ever before.

My days began at nine and never ended before one in the morning or even later. My studio was joined to the flat by a passage which, of all places, I dreaded most, because I had hardly got out of bed before people were waiting for me there. Sometimes there was quite a crowd, sometimes a smaller gathering, but never fewer than ten people trying to sell me books or costumes, publishers offering me work or bringing proofs for correction, antique dealers and ordinary visitors—in spite of the notice I had put up, that I received only between five and seven in the evening. But foreigners always had the excuse that they were just leaving Paris, they would not keep me long, all they wanted was a signed photograph or something similar. The Americans even brought their cameras with them. This went on until ten o'clock, the time for the publishers who came to see how work was progressing. They would begin talking. There was no stopping them; and if more than one came, which was

usual, there was very little time left for any real work. Meanwhile Louise, the cook, would have the meal ready and ring the bell loudly for lunch. This was at about half past twelve. By two o'clock I was back at work. Eventually I managed to arrange things differently. I had breakfast at a quarter to nine, and at half past twelve I had a light lunch, consisting of a cup of tea and a slice of bread and butter, which enabled me to work right through till four o'clock, when I had my real lunch. In this way I made use of midday when no one interrupted me because everyone was eating. Then I could let them wait a little, which meant that I received from half past five till half past six. After that supper; and by eight o'clock I was again at work until eleven when I took some light refreshment and worked on as long as was necessary, usually until one or two. On most days I managed to keep to this programme, except when some official occasion forced me to change my routine. The worst problem was invitations to dinner. I solved it by going to them all at once. For instance, on a Wednesday, I went to five or six dinners one after the other, staying, at most, half an hour at each. Even so, I was delayed in my work and had to make up the time at night. In the end, the only salvation was to disappear to friends in the country, and take my work with me. However, my Saturdays from five till seven were one thing I could not avoid. Then people from all walks of life met at my studio, and many important things, both political and artistic, were discussed. Writers read their latest work, I had instruments ready for musicians—a harmonium, a piano, a violin and a cello—and usually my guests did not leave at seven but stayed on, sometimes until the early hours of the morning.

Paris had now taken up Art Nouveau and the Val de Grâce studio became a centre for some of the people who gave the new style its bizarre content. It was in fact a new way of life, embracing everything from pottery to philosophy and its apostles were not only artists but historians, lawyers, scientists, even dandies like Robert de Montesquiou or famous beauties, bravely introducing Art

Nouveau fashions. After Cléo de Mérode, who modelled her hairstyle as in Mucha's panneau 'Lily'—or rather vice versa, as the symbolic flower figure is obviously her idealized portrait—others evolved a coiffure from the 'Carnation' with its heavy, low-set bun 'â la ventre affamé'. Gowns flowed in rich folds and the corset, having relaxed its grip, allowed the female body the freedom of its natural curves. The skirt formed a train which the ladies knew how to whirl with an unobtrusive kick round their legs and which gave their figures the characteristic S-line of Art Nouveau. The colours were subdued and sophisticated—anaemic, as they are called today—since every shrill contrast was considered barbaric, unfit for minds hovering in higher spiritual regions. Black and mauve orchids were the right thing—sunflowers only on a background of a dark midnight sky. The monastic studio at Val de Grâce was in a way a fashion centre for the mondaines and demimondaines and yet the man who inhabited it, handsome, famous and single, seemed to be strangely inaccessible to women. There were rumours about his relationship with Sarah. He was said to have had a romance which forever broke his heart. The fact was that he had too high an opinion of women and himself to be flirtatious and too low an opinion not to be afraid of consequences. Besides, there was another reason, called Berthe de Lalande.

Who this young woman was, and exactly what part she played for eight years in his life, is a mystery. She has disappeared without trace. There is no explanation why the smallest reminder of their long and intimate association had to be totally obliterated. One day they parted, and Father with a mystifying thoroughness erased everything in his papers that related to Berthe de Lalande. He

even made absolutely illegible any words that presumably referred to her in his old notebooks.

I might have never known of her existence, had Monsieur Bourrelier, Father's old friend, not mentioned her name when I visited him shortly before the last war. The moment he saw I was not informed, he tried to back out and finally volunteered only one small piece of information: Berthe de Lalande's portrait appeared in the special Mucha issue of *La Plume* under the title 'Illustration pour la revue Le Monde Moderne'. He even showed it to me—a pleasant, young girl reading near a window—and remarked with a strange sadness that she was a good and very sweet person.

Later, when I looked for the portrait at home, I went through all ten or twelve copies of *La Plume* but never found it. This mystified me. I remembered clearly M. Bourrelier opening the book and showing it to me. I went to the library and borrowed the 1897 volume of *La Plume*. My suspicion was correct: on page 437 was the missing portrait which Father had evidently torn from the copies he kept at home.

By now I was really interested and started following up every available clue, but in vain. M. Bourrelier had by then died, so had other contemporaries of Father. There was no one to ask, nowhere to look. After months of research the results were less than meagre: two postcards addressed to Father's sister Anna, one bearing a Montparnasse date stamp 12.4.1904, with nothing but 'Mille souvenirs . . . B. de Lalande', the other equally laconical sent for Christmas of the same year. A third postcard to Anna, written during summer holidays of 1903 by the old cook, Louise, reads: 'I am here with Madame Berthe at the seaside.' This at least established that the affair lasted

until 1904 when Father had been seriously involved for the last nine months with Maruška. A further undated postcard from Prague, addressed to Anna this time, bears both Father's and Berthe's signatures. Apparently they went to Bohemia together and met the family. M. Bourrelier's son finally produced a photo of Father with Berthe at the publisher's country house at Verrières which enabled me to indentify Berthe on yet another picture. This was all. Or almost all, till Mr Eliot Stein, a collector of Art Nouveau, candidly produced a copy of *Ilsée* with the inscription 'Ex libris: Mme Berthe Mucha'. What was I to make of it? I felt like some archaeologist piecing together his image of the primeval man from fragments of bones. Who was Berthe de Lalande? One of the girls at Madame Charlotte's, a *midinette*, a country girl? Judging from her handwriting she was from a simple family, unassuming, quiet, thrifty and kind. The pictures show each time the same delicate, melancholy beauty, the soft and slightly sensual hands and a slim, youthful figure. It is difficult to judge how much she meant to Father, if she had to be erased out of his life so thoroughly. One thing is certain: Father never wanted to marry any woman—least of all a foreigner. If he nevertheless continued with Berthe, he must have known—they must both have known—that one day it would end. How did this come about? Father's correspondence with his sister Anna contains a sentence, written in 1905 on a postcard from the boat sailing to America: 'And you can write to Lalande. She behaved well.'

What makes the Berthe de Lalande episode still more enigmatic is her strange position in the rue du Val de Grâce. She appears to have lived there, but the Press never mentioned her in the social column, she was never

invited anywhere and not a single thank you letter refers to her presence. Yet there are two letters from Marold which throw quite a different light on the ménage. In the first, undated and sent from No. 77, rue de Rome, probably in 1896, Marold asks: 'How are things? . . . Have you moved already? Are you bringing home potatoes, radishes and dill? Now she can make you dumplings. Enjoy them, only don't let them be too expensive. They might cost you your freedom. Better go on eating at Charlotte's—oh well, you know best.' The second, written on 22 May 1897 from Prague, ends: 'Greetings to your wife from both of us.'

The epilogue came in August 1939. A few days before the outbreak of war, I arranged to leave occupied Prague to join the army in France. There was the Gestapo, but there was also a perfectly legal way of transferring some money to Paris. I completed the necessary form for the maximum amount of 2000 crowns and took it to the bank. The clerk merely glanced at the sum, my name and my address in Prague and said: 'For Madame de Lalande, as usual, sir?'

In that situation, when every minute counted, I had no time to feel or express surprise. I could not even allow myself the luxury of making a single inquiry. All I knew was, I had to get out quickly. When, many years later, I was able to return to the mysterious money transfer to France, even this last clue, kept secret for forty years, had vanished.

In 1897, everything in the rue du Val de Grâce was still going its usual way. Berthe was there, Louise the cook, the English footman and Ženíšek the hanger-on. Paris

welcomed the Tsar with the greatest pomp ever seen, motor-cars rumbled down the streets, Zola published *J'accuse*, and Sarah returned from yet another victorious tour of America. This time, in addition to money, she brought with her a new American play, Gilette's *Secret Service*, for which she anticipated the record crowds that fascinated her on Broadway. But the success of autumn 1897 was far from equalling that of the spring season when she had put on *Tosca* in March, and another Rostand play, *La Samaritaine*, in April. Both shows got an enthusiastic reception and Mucha—who once again shared in the production—designed two more posters, the fifth and the sixth of his Bernhardt series.

> The theatrical experiments of Mme Sarah Bernhardt [wrote the *Gazette de France* after the first night of *Secret Service*] are interesting for the illustrated posters which each of them has spread over Paris. Thus she has given us some very nice work by Mucha. This time Mme Bernhardt is showering us with American posters. It has not brought her any luck. The failure of *Secret Service* exceeds all bounds.

It is curious that Sarah should have decided in favour of an American poster unless she wanted to give the play —in which she herself did not appear—appropriate Barnum publicity. It must have been a last-minute change of policy, since there exists a first draft of a poster for *Secret Service* by Mucha, dedicated to Duberry, actor and later manager of the Sarah Bernhardt Theatre at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal.

'It is painful to be present at such a lamentable spectacle,' wrote *Eclair* about this American play. 'Complicated to the point of being a headache,' *Gaulois* complained. 'An enormous failure, but an absolutely legitimate one, into the bargain,' pronounced *Le Journal.*

Sarah sank a hundred thousand from her American earnings in the venture and the autumn's failure could not be redeemed even by Sardou, whose fashionable *Spiritisme* was received with cool embarrassment. Eleonora Duse had just electrified Paris with her version of *La Dame aux Camélias*, Réjane was a sweeping success in *Mme Sans Gêne*, and Coquelin triumphed in the greatest play of the year—Rostand's *Cyrano*. For a while it seemed as though the public, tired of Sarah's glory, would turn to another star. But Bernhardt, far from being discouraged, was coming up with a new surprise: the opening of a far larger theatre at the Place de Châtelet in January 1899. Like Britain, she might lose battles but never lost a war.

Mucha was now producing a wide variety of work, from large posters of the *Trappistine* type to menu cards for ceremonial state receptions, panneaux, illustrations and countless magazine covers. He was also devoting more and more time to teaching at the studio hired from Colarossi. As the number of pupils steadily increased and the makeshift accommodation became inadequate, it was evident that sooner or later he would have to start a school in his own premises.

About the same time Whistler, then at the height of his fame, thought he ought to help his former model, Carmen Rossi, towards some form of permanent security. He lent her £200 to set up a school of painting and promised to add glamour to the new establishment by teaching twice a week himself. This was a considerable inducement to students, excited by Whistler's eccentric personality, but Carmen, who had posed for him since childhood, knew she needed a more reliable person to make her venture last more than one season.

The Académie Carmen, as the new school was called,

was installed in a two-storey building in the Passage Stanislav—now the rue Jules Chaplain—which joined the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs a couple of hundred yards from the rue de la Grande Chaumière. As the preparations for the new school were widely discussed in and around Mme Charlotte's, it is easy to establish why and how Mucha became the other teacher. Whistler was a friend of the Symbolists. He and Mucha had known each other for several years and they had many points of contact among their pupils. Charles Dana Gibson of the 'Gibson girl' fame had been living in Paris since 1894 and had probably studied with both Whistler and Mucha. There is at least a marked Mucha influence visible in his younger works. The same applies to others, like Penfield or Sloan, and it might easily have been the American and English pupils who gave the original impulse to Mucha and Whistler joining forces at the Académie Carmen. Father's memoirs, which are littered with inaccuracies, state: 'I had so many pupils that I had to call in Whistler's help.' As there is usually a grain of truth in each of his statements, it is possible that the whole idea was actually his. He was looking for premises to extend his course and Carmen was anxious to become a respectable woman. If Father mentioned his problem to her at Charlotte's and Carmen offered 'to see what could be done' the whole plan might have blossomed forth in five minutes. She found the premises, Whistler lent her money and, one day in 1898, a poster went up, stating that the Académie Carmen was taking in pupils for 50 francs a term.

Thanks to Whistler's name, the new establishment opened crowded. More and more students asked for admission and Carmen bought herself an expensive silk gown. The classes started, but Whistler, who liked to time

his entries properly, allowed a week to go by before he appeared for his first lesson. The students were by then so worked up that, when he finally walked in, the silence was so tense that the only sound in the classroom was a fly buzzing and bumping against the window pane.

Whistler, short, slim and erect like an army officer, dressed with studied extravagance. He wore white duck trousers, dinner jacket and a straw hat. He used make-up to appear younger—he was sixty-four at the time—and covered with the arrogance of a dandy his uncertainty and doubts. While he lashed out contemptuously at other artists, he got up at night, worrying about his pictures, and went to look at them, studying them in the light of a candle. His vast ambition and extreme touchiness were in fact the result of his painful vulnerability. When the Musée de Luxembourg wanted to buy the famous portrait of his mother, he allowed it to go cheaply, much against his own principles, for fear he might miss the honour of hanging among the immortals. Even so, occasionally his carefully calculated effects misfired. When Rodin came to visit him, he removed all his pictures so that he could reluctantly produce them when asked. But Rodin made no attempt to see them and Whistler, deeply offended, never forgave him this lack of co-operation.

Students who were looking forward to his famous sarcasm and wit were not disappointed, but their enthusiasm faded away quickly when Whistler began introducing his puritan rules. The nude was banned in mixed classes and the pupils were not allowed to sing, talk, smoke or sully the walls with charcoal drawings. For work from the nude the sexes were separated—a very unpopular decision, particularly among the male students. Whistler's particular fad was the exact placing of paints on the

palette. 'A painter must be able to paint in the dark,' he asserted. 'The palette is the place for experimenting, not the canvas. By the time they reach the canvas, the colours must be already worked out.' When correcting, he mostly limited himself to caustic remarks: 'What do you think you're doing?' 'I just paint what I see, Mr Whistler.' 'Ah, but the shock will come when you see what you paint.'

> A large room, crudely lighted by flaring gas jets [a contemporary writer in *The Artist* described the Académie Carmen in 1901], drab walls covered with splashes of paint, a multitude of easels, before which students of both sexes and all nationalities sit or crouch, all of them busy drawing the nude from life. This is the *atelier Mucha* by night. By day it is Whistler's domain, and certain framed rules, parabolically expressed, proclaim 'The Master's' predominating influence in the place.

As Mucha and Whistler worked at the school at different times, their completely different characters had little opportunity of clashing. Besides, where Whistler was difficult, Mucha was calm and tolerant, and even his remark, commenting on the end of their collaboration, 'Nobody could stick it out very long with Whistler,' referred rather to the students than to himself. Whistler recognized no master and was therefore unable to teach others. He was impatient and authoritarian. 'I am not arguing with you,' he would say, 'I am telling you.' He was incredibly puritan in his attitude to other artists. He knew Oscar Wilde well and used to visit him, but refused even to greet him in the street when he came out of prison. He was particularly hard on the British, abusing them whenever he could. On hearing of the siege of Shanghai during the Boxer Rebellion, he lamented: 'Oh dear, dear, I hope they will save the place. All the Englishmen in the world are not worth one blue China vase.' At

the same time he was much impressed by the British aristocracy and emulated rather their haughty indifference than the boyish eccentricity of his fellow-countrymen. The insulting remarks he came out with were made even worse by his high-pitched and penetrating voice. Once, in a hat shop, a customer came up to him, taking him for an assistant, and complaining: 'This hat doesn't fit.' 'Nor does your coat,' replied Whistler icily.

Mucha was not taken in with his dandyism or ironical wit, but he was extremely sensitive to Whistler's criticism. He was becoming more and more aware of the oppressive contradiction between his ideals and his work, which he found much too subject to the passing taste, and Whistler kept confirming him in this view. That Whistler appreciated his technique is evident from his answer to a student's question why he had Mucha's posters in his studio instead of valuable originals—'So that I can show young fools like you what I mean by good drawing'—but he voiced the same objections which had been worrying Father for a long time.

> The young man is a great draughtsman [he told Hayden-Clarendon], but he has yet to grasp the great truth that an artist should be the interpreter of his own generation, and that his proper subjects lie not in etherealized women, nor in those things that are thought picturesque, merely because they are strange, but in the streets, clothes, actions and appearance of today.

Whistler was firing at a sitting target, for Father believed this as well. They had discussed it often enough and Whistler knew all about his catastrophic contracts and had seen the things he sketched whenever he had a moment for himself. In these pastel variations in blue and orange, he was as close to Whistler as Whistler was to him when

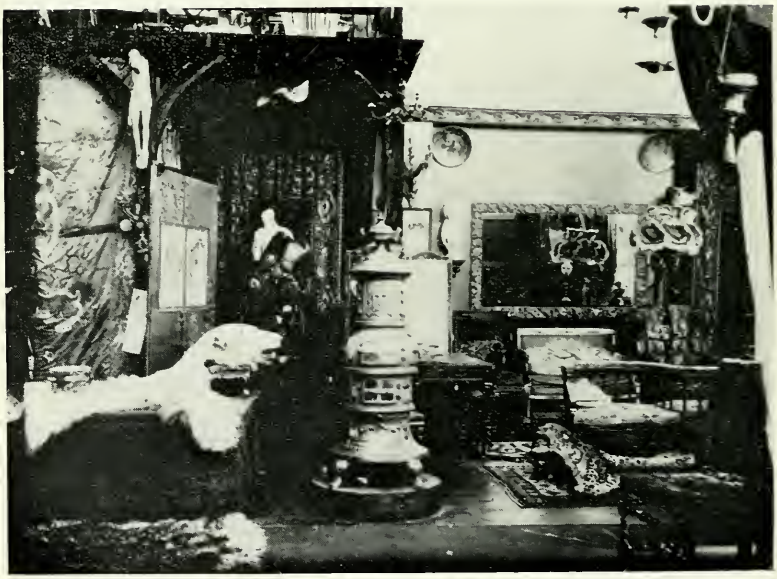
decorating the 'Peacock Room'. With all their difference of character, they had something in common, concealed by the fact that one was a pure colourist, the other a born linearist. When, many years later, Mucha returned to oil painting, his best works showed how strong this affinity between them was.

There was yet another common ground where they met, Spiritualism. In spite of his pretended youthfulness—he took ten years off his age—Whistler felt that he was getting old, he was often ill, his heart was weak and he began to fear death. There was no lift to his studio on the sixth floor and he nearly collapsed after his daily trek up the stairs. When anybody asked: 'Why don't you have a studio on the ground floor?' he replied morosely: 'When I die, I will . . .' He got interested in Spiritualism with Father's eager help, because he needed an assurance that his life would not end with death. Under the disintegrating hulk of the dandy there appeared the artist desperately in love with life and ever doubtful about his own work.

His pupils at the Académie Carmen meanwhile rapidly dwindled away, and the school became more and more exclusively Mucha's affair. By 1901, Whistler had only one pupil left, by the name of Adams, whom he decided to bind to his person by the medieval deed of apprenticeship. This was, however, his last sally into pedagogy, for shortly afterwards, in 1903, he died. By coincidence, his name is linked with the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery, where in 1877, he figured among the 'dissidents' and where, almost a hundred years later, Mucha's work was brought back to the public's notice.

M. Freund-Deschamps with his daughter, c. 1900

At work, rue du Val de Grâce



The studio, rue du Val de Grâce, c. 1900

17

'SCIENCE knows no limits,' my father once wrote. 'Today there is no science to which this dictum would apply more aptly than occult science which actually is not occult at all, since it is being brought into the austere light of rational study by the most competent minds. Man in his curiosity is lifting the edge of the veil and can only marvel!'

Father had been lifting the edge diligently for many years, but now he was offered the opportunity of his life.

My good friends, the Siamours, were giving a party and, as a neighbour of theirs, I was invited to dinner. There was a large number of guests and, as chance would have it, I was placed next to Colonel de Rochas, the librarian at the Paris Polytechnic. After dinner one of the guests expressed a wish to see some of my latest work, so I took them along to my studio. The one most interested was my neighbour at the dinner table. He particularly liked the posture of the figures and said he would be delighted if I would call on him as there was something he would like to show me. He was going into the problem of extrasensory perception which might interest me, but for the time being asked me not to talk about it to anybody because he hadn't yet finished his thesis. So we fixed a day and time, and thus began our friendship which was to last until his death shortly after the World Exhibition.

When I came to see him, he introduced me to a lady named Mme de Ferkel, whom he used as a medium, and explained to me what it was all about. He had noticed in my studio I had a harmonium, piano, cello and violin for musical evenings. He was very enthusiastic about this and asked if I would allow

him to work with the medium in this setting. I readily agreed, since my own interests had brought me a long way in the same direction.

The experiments we did led to some very interesting results, and we used to meet regularly once a week, usually on Sundays. Besides de Rochas, there was Camille Flammarion, who became my close friend, and various other people mostly from Germany, Britain, Spain and India. On one occasion Flammarion brought along the entire Spanish Royal family. They, too, were most eager to lift the edge.

The experiments raised quite a stir because the astronomer Flammarion was enormously popular and his scientific discoveries invariably made front-page news. 'Few men,' ran his obituary, 'have known such popularity as Camille Flammarion, and one would have to quote the names of Gambetta, Victor Hugo, Pasteur and Henri Poincaré to find anything similar.' Born in 1842, he entered at sixteen the Paris Observatory and published at nineteen his first scientific work, *La Pluralité des Mondes Habités*. In 1882, one of his admirers presented him with a fully-equipped observatory at Juvisy. He lived near Mucha's studio on the corner of the Avenue de l'Observatoire and the rue Cassini, hated wasting time on social engagements and slept long from eleven till nine in the morning. In 1868, he made his first ascent in a balloon to conduct meteorological observations, he was the founder of the Astronomical Society and put in his will 'that my heart is to be removed from my breast and offered to my native village, Montigni-le-Roi, where it beat for the first time'. He also left Montigni 10,000 francs and his bust in Carrara marble.

A true son of his time, Flammarion had from his earliest youth studied the occult sciences, aiming to penetrate not only outer space but also the mysteries of life after death.

Father, who had previously had dealings only with amateurs of the Strindberg type, found at last a friend who was able to satisfy his ardent desire for genuine science. Thanks to Flammarion he not only shed various medieval superstitions but also his last doubts. Whatever the famous scientist declared, became irrefutable truth. With this perspective in mind, life had now to be organized, exceeding by far its physical bounds.

The studio in the rue du Val de Grâce, up to this time a Byzantine chapel, was now converted into a laboratory of the occult, and the experiments conducted by de Rochas and Flammarion were not only to 'lift the edge' but to spread the new knowledge to all sections of society. In 1899, de Rochas wrote in the magazine *Nature*:

> I have found all the necessary qualities in one of the best known models of Paris, Mlle Lina, whose education in hypnosis I have now patiently completed . . . A first series of experiments carried out in M. Mucha's studio have dealt with the expression of sentiments induced by a story . . . read to the model while in trance. We photographed the attitudes relevant to the seven capital sins and the three theological virtues . . . and to such allegories as 'France after the loss of Alsace and Lorraine' and 'France after their restitution'.

'It is extremely difficult to photograph these scenes,' admitted de Rochas, who captured the heroic gestures of the medium with an enormous plate camera. While de Rochas focused under a black cloth, his two colleagues would stumble about after the gesticulating lady, shortening or lengthening the legs of the tripod and swiftly handing up the plates, so that the exposure could be made before the medium again got out of range. Pioneers of science could spare neither effort nor dignity.

The experiments that followed were even more complicated.

In the studio of Monsieur Mucha, M. de Rochas . . . studied the relation between music and gesture [reported the Press]. He would play a melody to a medium in the cataleptic phase of hypnosis and would watch with pleasure as the medium translated her impression into gesture. The Russian national anthem was played and the medium, a beautiful girl . . . stretched out her bare arms and inclined her head tenderly over her left shoulder. Next, Marguerite's invocation 'Anges purs, anges radieux' was played and the medium, standing on tiptoe, her arms outstretched, her fingers spread, her eyes radiant, seemed . . . to want to soar to the sky. Finally, Javanese, Polish and Arab dances were played, and it was found that during an ascending scale the medium, on hearing the tonic, would contract her feet; at the third, her pelvis; at the fifth, her hands; When one reflects . . . that in Arab melodies the most frequent interval is the third, one can see that the dancers . . . are fatally induced to move the pelvis; on learning that in Javanese melodies the fifth is repeated more than any other interval, one understands why little Malay girls mechanically open and turn their hands . . . and dance to the tips of their fingers . . .

'O, beauté des sciences experimentales!' the article ends rapturously.

The results of these practices began to show in Mucha's work. The paintings he produced to make up for his 'frivolous, fashionable vagaries' depicted ecstatic figures expressing profound ideas by gestures reminiscent of Mme de Ferkel. Similarly his ornamentation smuggled more and more occult, Rosicrucian and masonic symbols into trivial themes. Whereas on the one hand he scornfully rejected the fashionable element in Art Nouveau, he carried its bizarre side to even bigger perfection with the strange convolutions of his mind.

The kind of thoughts that were occupying his mind at this time are documented in a small book, bound in white leather and entitled 'Thoughts and Dreams . . .' in which

he noted down whatever occurred to him during his work or in the middle of the night.

'Lies are the greatest evil on this earth. Lies are the death of the spirit, but the body must die for truth.'

'Love binds anger's hands.'

'In art the truth of an idea must be accompanied by the truth of form.'

'It is no humiliation to recognize someone greater than oneself, but to refuse to imitate such is shameful.'

'Cleave to love for itself, not for the person it relates to.'

'Each must look at himself through a black glass, at others through a rosy one.'

'Love is cheerful, only a guilty conscience is sad.'

'A tear in the eye of a speaker can work wonders, but the tears of a leader can destroy whole nations.'

'Art enables us to impart our love to the world.'

These aphoristic observations developed into a practice which Father acquired thanks to Flammarion and kept up throughout his life: automatic writing. Flammarion hinted that what he wrote down had not necessarily come out of his head, but might have been dictated by beings, manifesting themselves through his person. Their Spiritualism based on a belief in reincarnation was a mixture of various religions plus a strong dose of primitive manism. Man, born into this world to go through a further stage of developments, had in the upper regions he was aiming for his solicitous guardians, recruited mostly from dead relatives, who were only waiting to receive him in their midst the moment he passed over. To Father, who had not known much family life, such an arrangement of the hereafter evidently did not constitute any considerable deterrent. With confidence he turned to his dead relatives asking questions on every aspect of his life, and countless

pages of his automatic writing reveal with painful clarity all the anxieties and doubts which secretly pursued him. Am I really an artist? Am I not in a blind alley? Why does the public not appreciate what I attach the greatest importance to? For a long time, too, he was not as sure as he appeared to be about life proper after death, to judge from the cross-examination he put each new spirit through, to make sure whether their statements agreed.

I have no idea what happened to me—suddenly I found myself as it were outside, as if I had woken up from a deep sleep. It must have lasted a long time before I got outside, everybody was in tears, but I was not worried in the least, because I saw that I was not dead. We went up and up, I don't know how high, but higher than the houses and the towers, we flew through walls, windows, everything . . . Nobody can imagine what it's like here: everywhere black darkness of night, only somewhere something is shining—little fires, white like big sparks; these are the spirits. I am also a spirit, I have no shape, nothing. A yellowy spark. But strange to say, I have not forgotten anything. I can even remember poems I learned at school by heart.

This was Grandmother's story. Růžena Jesenská, a lady poet, who once tried unsuccessfully to marry Father, explained her case more realistically.

First I went through hell. I was terribly ill and nobody thought of me. My friends didn't want to believe I was so bad, and I lay there for weeks, deserted by everybody except the charwoman. One day I felt I had a high temperature, my illness got worse, I lay absolutely helpless and could only shake with anxiety. After some time, maybe a day and a half, I began to feel calm. It was as though I was so tired by all the pain that I had ceased to feel it. I lay there stiff and waited. What I was waiting for I didn't know, and even today I don't know. Then I heard a faint rustling near me. Something moved, I listened but I could see nothing. The rustling stopped and now—I don't know how to describe it, it's so strange—suddenly it was as though somebody caught hold

of me and started playing a game of chase with me. I climbed out of bed and we flew around the room, somebody held me under my arms to stop me falling, and I flew about like a fairy. I could see more clearly, but I could not speak, and I was so light that I rose to the ceiling and touched it with my hands to make sure that I was really up there. Then I looked down on the bed, and there—I nearly cried out—I saw myself, my own self, lying asleep. I could not believe my eyes and went down to the bed. It was my dead body—I was dead.

Then I looked around to see what was holding me. It was my father, and next to him was my mother. I looked at myself. I was dressed in a gown, made of some white material, infinitely delicate, with white sleeves, and reaching right down to my ankles. My feet were bare, and I had a sort of hood on my head.

After a joyous welcome from friends and family, which took place without words, since spirits communicate by thoughts, Jesenská set off on the big journey.

Some kind person came flying through the air, put his hands on my head as though he had read my thoughts, and then with a gesture intimated that we should go to see God. We passed through windows and roof, flying upwards at an enormous speed, until I no longer saw either the land or the town, the earth disappeared, and in perhaps two minutes we were entering a vast space full of lights and brightness, and crowded with beings like ourselves. A moment later it grew darker over space and as if from behind a cloud a light shone forth and a huge, bright being appeared and looked at me.

This was clearly a reminiscence of Father's 'Lord's Prayer' which was published in Paris in 1899, when Růžena Jesenská was young and alive. Another account, this time from a man, also has the same characteristics of space flight:

I was getting weaker, my movements were heavier, my breath more laboured and my heart-beats barely audible. Then there was an interval like going to sleep, and in my sleep I saw several

figures treating me like a sick person. I saw everything black, there were no lights, until suddenly—I was delivered. We flew off, nothing was to be seen except darkness, no stars, and we flew off through the dark emptiness until we found ourselves where there was a misty glow, and in that mist, great sparks speaking a language without words.

Gradually the circle of contacts beyond the grave extended and the accounts developed into long-distance conversations, with several friends and relatives waiting at the other end of the line to pick up the receiver. Father's voice and his questions at this end are unfortunately missing.

What? I don't know. It's not impossible, I'll ask, I'll know in a second—Here I am again. I have it from our Karel. He knows everything. He says, perhaps yes, but he doesn't know when or under what circumstances. But he says he'll ask, he'll be back in a minute, so we can write about other matters in the meantime. Yesterday I spoke to Poincaré, he's very fond of you and sends you greetings. He wants you to arrange a time for him, tomorrow perhaps, after Father's gone. I must end now. Karel is still away, but he'll be back any moment. Ah, here he is, writing . . . Dear Alphonse, I've been scouting around. I've asked many spirits, but nobody knows anything for certain, they all just agree it would be a good thing, but they don't know when and how, in other words, nothing. I might hear more tomorrow. I'm on the move in my job in any case. Going round the solar system, searching for good thoughts, lost and unused. I catch them, bring them back and get people to put them into effect. There's a lot of us searching for good thoughts like this, because many good thoughts get lost—they fly off, disappear, sometimes they get stuck, and then we have to free them and return them to life again . . .

The spirits of Father's relatives wrote in Czech, but other dead friends wrote in their native language. 'I would never have thought it possible to communicate once I was

dead,' wrote Poincaré. 'For here I am dead and living at the same time. I was terribly afraid of dying and yet I live better than before. The moment after I closed my eyes was very strange. At first my body was all numb and all I could hear was the noise of my blood flowing through my arteries . . .' Then follows the familiar description of passing through the darkness into light, and a short comeback to the bedroom. 'My body evidently could not decide to put an end to its human career but very gently, all the care I had given it in life faded away bit by bit until I found it absolutely uninteresting . . .' His description of the vast bright space is particularly dramatic.

> In the space there are men of all the terrestial and super-terrestial races and bizarre shapes and animals hovering on the perimeter of this immense community. In the middle is an enormous flame, filling all space with an extremely brilliant light. From this light a sort of loud-speaker was bellowing words which I couldn't understand, inarticulate roaring sounds transmitting to those present the thoughts of this sublime being.

Two pages further, Poincaré continues in a thoroughly conversational tone.

> Well, that's how I've passed the time since my death. I'm very pleased to have come to your house and I see you, my dear friend, with different eyes than during your last visit to me in Paris . . . My sister Suzanne is here with me and would like to say a word to you. So I will leave you, my dear friend, and if you would like to speak to me, just call me any time and we will talk of more important things. Good-bye—Poincaré.

Enter his sister: 'Good evening, Monsieur Mucha. You remember me? Madame Freund-Deschamps . . . I am very pleased that you can remember the happy moments at Jeand'Heures. Oh, yes, all that has greatly changed . . .' Long-distance small talk from outer space.

As gradually all the friends of his youth died, they came in twos and threes for short nightly visits, they talked and chatted, everything was as before, as it was during their lives which, in spite of all the bliss of their weightless state, they clearly could not forget. 'Yes, my dear friend, you're absolutely right, but the world today is so common that people are satisfied with twaddle. No, no, you can't even imagine how common it is. You'll be preaching in the desert . . .' And after an animated discussion, the subject of which is not clear: 'But don't be discouraged. Everything will end well. Clairin, my friend, is also here and would like to have a word with you. Good-bye, then, my dear, I greet you and bless you—Sarah B.'

Doctor Favre, whom we shall hear more about later, when he was first brought along, expressed somewhat unsociable surprise. 'My dear friend, I am really astonished to see that you are still alive . . .'

But it was not only friends of recent years who came. Long conversations, written in precise, classical German, speak of friendships in earlier lifetimes, as though two contemporaries who had not heard from each other since their school days were meeting again after a long time. 'So now you're in the country where I spent some of my happiest hours, Bohemia! How will friendship between our two peoples develop in the future?' There follow a few reflections on politics, after which the spirit comments in poetry: 'In stress and worry, in summer and winter, man stands in the stream of time . . .' Then 'I greet you with all my heart—Yours, Goethe.' Their friendship was evidently very close. 'When you were in Weimar, I was with you and much enjoyed myself . . .' But the communications were not confined only to social matters. Goethe gave very precise advice as to how Father should

paint his latest work, a philosophical triptych 'Age of Reason, Wisdom and Love'.

> Yes, you have got the right idea. That figure's eyes radiate seeing, not, as with humans who receive the observed image. But eyes are not everything. I see the Almighty with rather a large head and abundant hair . . . a high forehead, very narrow temples, his face altogether longish and narrow, slighter towards the chin and broader at the brow. The two cheekbones slightly visible . . . the nose somewhat long and rather wide at the base—like the nose of the Zeus of Otricoli—no groove between the brow and nose . . .

There follow three more pages of precise instructions. Was this a form of a subconscious dealing with a problem that could no more be solved by the mind ridden with doubts?

They make strange reading, all these long dialogues with the dead, which he wrote down in peaceful concentration, under a table-lamp in the corner of his studio. Each one has a somewhat different handwriting, different language and different style. One day I gave in to temptation and compared the various writings with real letters and signatures of Clairin, Sarah and Goethe. They looked the same. Or almost the same. As though written by a hand only a little older, a little more shaky.

18

ART NOUVEAU had strange, tangled roots rising out of a deep, dark swamp like the roots in the 'Death of Barbarossa'. Its frivolous aspect was the product of mysticism, of the *fin de siècle* aura, of rebelliousness against classicism and of an acutely felt necessity to give the changing way of life its appropriate form. In the age of electric light, steel bridges, ocean liners and dirigible airships, the style of past ages lost all justification. It was out of step with people hurrying into the first Métro and gazing spellbound at the miraculous cinematograph. Just as the upper decks of the buses were not made for ladies in crinolines, Gothic and Renaissance were no climate for the proud owners of chugging motor-cars. There was no alternative but to get back to the origins of art, to the living plant, to the animals and insects, and start moulding shapes in a contemporary spirit. Millions of new consumers were acquiring millions of new objects. The industrial revolution was spreading the ugliness of everyday life. If art was to have any right to survive, it had to do something about it and quickly.

To us the ideas proclaimed by William Morris have become so obvious—perhaps too obvious—that we fail to realize their revolutionary implications. At a time when people were freeing themselves from the stifling weight of dead conventions, the slogan 'Art for the People' had a dangerously seditious ring, provoking the bourgeois who reacted with the sensitivity of litmus to the slightest trace

of acid eroding the established order. The bourgeois allergy to Art Nouveau did not stem merely from its newness, but because its sub-title, often stressed more than the original name, read 'Art Social'.

The person who did most to propagate these unpopular views was Henri Cazalis (1840–1909), doctor, lawyer and poet, who published his poetry and social tracts under the pseudonym of Jean Lahor. Although his ideas derived from socialism and William Morris, he differed from both in one basic point. He did not believe in any creative capacity of the people. To him the masses were an amorphous levelling element which had to be fed art from above in order to make them at least partly receptive to beauty and to instil a desire to improve their circumstances. He did not deny the existence of folk art, but doubted whether it could be revived in a highly industrialized society.

Mucha immediately took a fancy to Lahor and became one of the first members of his 'Société Internationale de l'Art Populaire' along with Lalique, Gallé, Grasset and Horta. Now, with Flammarion's occultism on the one hand and Lahor's 'Art Social' on the other, his craving for ideal motives was at least partly satisfied. He was still not content, however—his patriotic feelings remained frustrated—but this too, he was convinced, would be dealt with in due course.

Lahor's noble efforts evidently had a great appeal for the younger generation, as is apparent from an article by Hladik, an enthusiastic popularizer of French culture in Bohemia.

> I was very keen to meet the poet of 'Illusions'—a work that Jules Lemaître compared to the 'Reflections' of Marcus Aurelius —to whom I was indebted for many hours of exquisite artistic delight. I was astonished when I encountered a vivacious, elderly

gentleman with a sensitive face, and radiant, penetrating eyes, who was not in any way blasé from his Buddhist dreams of life's worthlessness, and who, sitting at the same table with Chéradam, the fiery, passionate protagonist of great international ideas, Charles Normand, eloquent enthusiast for the beauty of antiquity, and Alphonse Mucha, zealous for new forms of art, evidently felt thoroughly at his ease and propounded to us his practical, useful ideas on art, the role of beauty in life and the ennobling of the masses by culture and aesthetic education. I barely recognized Lahor; instead I thought I was listening to the English artist and socialist William Morris . . .

In his drawing-room, adorned with Monet landscapes, Louis XIV inlaid wardrobes, statues, bronzes, Chinese, Indian and Japanese vases, the discussion centred on the practical ways of propagating these ideas. Now I understood why my host was so concerned to have Alphonse Mucha with them, since his style speaks eloquently both to the élite and the masses. As a poet and doctor, Jean Lahor wanted to serve society by what he called hygiene aesthetic. Our towns are ugly. Streets are grey and dirty. The workers live in gloomy homes without light, cleanliness or comfort. Art, taste and beauty are non-existent among the people and as a result their life is dirty and unhealthy.

Like light, air and bread [said Lahor], or like science and justice, art is equally indispensable to the people as to ourselves, and in the interest of aesthetic hygiene we must not allow people to continue in the disgusting, unsightly living conditions they at present accept . . . Art everywhere in everything for everyone—that is one of the ambitions of the New Art . . . We must find something different for the people than getting drunk on alcohol or politics, the latter being no less stupefying and soul-destroying than drink. The Society of Art for the People will set up popular art reserves. It will establish contact with artists wishing to work in a style of simple, purposeful decoration, to see to the furnishing and appearance of housing for artisans, workers, poor clerks. It will set up collections of model dwellings inspired by country and town life of old and by countries where folk art is still alive.

The broad programme of this Society was outlined by Lahor in his project for an 'International Exhibition of Art and Popular Hygiene'. The first part consisted of plans for dwellings and public buildings, samples of façades, interior decoration and 'sanitary arrangements for public houses, town halls, school, smaller railway stations and third-class railway carriages'. The second part dealt with furniture. The third with 'mobile decoration', in the price range of five to ten francs: engravings, prints, lithographs, posters and photographs; the fourth with hygiene in the home, theatres, concerts, sports and games; the fifth with cheap eating houses and bars. Everything was to be 'simple, practical and attractive' in the best vein of Art Nouveau.

These proposals, which seem to us somewhat contradictory, were tackled regularly at the rue du Val de Grâce, providing the studio was not booked for visits from The Other World. There were Anatole France and Reynaldo Hahn, Rodin, Charpentier and Kupka, Jean-Paul Laurens, Rostand, Ginisty, but also Rochefort and Paul Adam, Haraucourt, Schuré, Charles Normand, Claretie—in fact a whole ideological central committee, except that there was no committee, no cells, no organization. Art Nouveau, if anything, was a way of life, a spontaneous movement, but certainly no organization. Similar groups existed everywhere—there were Gallé in Nancy, van de Velde and Maus in Brussels, Horta, Guimard in Paris. All of them enthusiasts for progress, whether with a big or small 'P', all of them producing in their workshops and studios objects of unusual beauty and entirely new form. At the same time things were made which were not beautiful and which caused the subsequent divided opinion on Art Nouveau. Many critics, even though

acknowledging it as a true style, call its products ugly, morbid, revolting, sickly. It is true that some aspects of 1900 were positively frightful. The bad taste of the public had vast opportunities and used them. Bathos and sentimentality were rampant. Could any other period have produced such a ridiculous spectacle as the Bronze men?

> They are usually two youths in the uniform of colonial soldiers [wrote Hladík], bronzed from head to foot, performing in the street outside a café. They arrive, adopt a stiff heroic posture, one charging with a wooden rifle, the other holding a trumpet to his lips—'The Assault'—then they stage 'The Wounded Soldier', or 'The Last Post' and the whole thing ends with a shower of coins caught in a helmet from the African campaigns.

But our age also has its bronze men. It would be unfair to throw all phenomena of 1900 into one sack. Objects of daily use, produced until recently by craftsmen with an eye, if not for beauty, at least for utility, became cheap, factory-made ware, vulgarizing every well-meant effort of the Art Nouveau artists by crude, endless repetition. What was meant to be unique and beautiful reeked of cheap, sentimental and prudish pretence of the lower middle class. Art Nouveau at its best is no worse than rococo. Had the rococo been a period of mass-production, part of its legacy would be as indigestible as bronze paperweights and lamps in the form of winged nymphs. It was the machine that muddled people, not the flowing hair *à la vermicelli*—the machine, attempting to imitate the craftsman's hand. We have since learned to distinguish between simple and practical objects of daily use and objects that are meant to be decorative. Seventy years ago people had not yet established this dividing line and we should not ridicule them for it. On the contrary—it is admirable, how

CIVILISATION MORT
TABLATURE MUSÉE
JARGONS FLUIDITÉ
CALCUL PASTORALE
KIOSQUES ZÉPHYR
BAGUE NAPOLÉON

Lettering by Mucha from a book of letter designs, Vienna 1900. The volume included work by Walter Crane and Gustave Lemmen

Study for a poster, c. 1903

An Intrepid Explorer of the highways of the sky. Alberto Santos-Dumont dressed for take-off, c. 1900

Santos-Dumont sets off for the Eiffel Tower from St Cloud, 26 October 1901, to wi the Deutsch Priz

quickly men saw their mistake and began to put it right. The fact that they let the baby go down the drain with the bath water happens so often in human behaviour that it needs no comment.

Art Nouveau, presented sometimes as a symptom of the lifeless and decadent *fin de siècle*, is in fact defended most convincingly by its enemies, who violently attacked it from the start. Max Nordau in his book published in 1893 under the title *Entartung*, lumped it together with the pre-Raphaelites, Symbolists, socialists, Zola, Wagner and Tolstoy, calling the lot a gang of criminals and demanding immediate police action. When Bing opened his Art Nouveau shop at the corner of the rue de Provence and the rue Chauchat in a building redecorated by Louis Bonnier, a critic wrote that 'all this savours of the low-down Englishman, the drugged Jewess and the cunning Belgian, or a charming salad compounded of these three fishes together'. The League 'pour la Moralization des Masses' fearing her efforts frustrated by the flood of Art Nouveau posters, decided to hit back with the same weapons. On the Boulevard des Capucins, facing the lifted skirts of Chéret's and Lautrec's underworld, it boldly displayed posters illustrating scenes from the life of St Geneviève by Puvis de Chavannes.

Once more one must remember the setting: the Dreyfus affair, Deroulède's chauvinism and the anti-Jewish incidents. Guimard, the man responsible for the Paris Métro, was a Jew. Victor Horta was blacklisted for having built the new 'Maison du Peuple' in Brussels. In 1894 the lawyer, Benoit-Levy, had founded the 'Société Populaire des Beaux Arts' with the purpose of propagating art among the people, and Frantz Jourdain, the architect who built Samaritaine, had founded the 'Société du Nouveau

Paris' which successfully agitated for the demolition of picturesque slums. Among the members of this outrageous organization were Chéret, Guimard, Rodin and Willette; Mucha did a poster for the 'Société Populaire' and covers for their various magazines. When he designed a poster for May Day 1899, it became clear to everyone on whose side Art Nouveau stood.

The trouble was that it combined within a single mind, rational occultism and sentimental socialism, each a sufficient source of confusion on its own. Logical and clear-thinking sceptics were rare in this strange society. Anatole France alone could not shift the balance, and even he had once been a Boulangist, applauding the Duke of Chartres' order to have every soldier possessing Abel Hermant's pacifist novel *Cavalier Misery* severely punished and the book burnt on the dung-heap. Later France transferred his allegiance to Jaurès and, when the Dreyfus campaign started, battled side by side with Zola against church and army. His visits to the Val de Grâce which resulted in Mucha illustrating his *Cléo*, were, like the presence of Viviani, merely so much grist to the mill of the opposition, and Anatole France's scepticism did nothing to dispel the rose-tinted mist of dreams, nourished as they were by an unshakable faith in Powers of Good.

Perhaps the sharp reaction against Art Nouveau that followed so soon after it had reached its peak was not due merely to French xenophobia but also to a surfeit of noble aims. The next generation, which went straight from school to get slaughtered on the Western Front, was less irritated by Art Nouveau's sinuous curves than by its idealistic sermons and theosophical messianism. The previous styles merely went out of fashion like the three-cornered hat and the wig. Art Nouveau alone was hounded

out with mockery, because it was not just a style but a way of life, hopelessly wrecked on the cliffs of the twentieth century. We no longer mind its foolish aspects. The following generations have developed whatever there was worth developing; we delight in its bizarre outcrops and smile at its mistakes. But still, somewhere deep down in our unconscious mind we feel irritated. Art Nouveau still smells a bit of the morgue.

19

On 2 January 1899, Sarah Bernhardt opened her new theatre at the Place du Châtelet, which had been magnificently fitted out for the occasion. The electric lighting alone cost 70,000 francs, and the foyer, like an ancestral gallery, hung with originals by Clairin, Besnard, Louise Abbéma and Mucha, representing Sarah in her most celebrated roles.

During the whole of the previous year Father was busy helping with the appointment of the new building, except for two months spent in Spain where he went to make studies for the illustrated Spanish history. The book never came out, but his encounter with Moorish Iberian culture enlarged his store of decorative elements, a welcome and enlivening supplement to his Byzantine resources. It is not certain whether he met Gaudi in Barcelona, but he enjoyed Spain just the same. His stage-coach was held up by bandits, he sat through numerous bullfights and in Madrid he produced a poster for the 'Cigarillos', the only work he allowed himself to do outside France.

As with all his theatrical activities, it is hard to establish what exactly was his share in the establishment of the new theatre. Judging from similar jobs in America, he probably did more than was necessary. He would take on any responsibility that was pushed on to him in the course of the reconstruction, even if it was really the architect's or the upholsterer's business. He told me, for instance, about

the trouble he had with the boxes. For the linings someone suggested a more modern shade than the dark red used *ad nauseam* in all the theatres of Europe. The experiment ended in fiasco. Ladies started complaining about trifles, they were moody and irritable and there was no end of incidents until the wallpaper was changed back to the dark red tone. 'It harmonizes with every shade of dress,' explained Father. 'It is the most flattering background for the delicate tints of female complexions. And the ladies felt it. After all, even precious stones look their best on dark red velvet.'

Productions at the new theatre followed in quick succession. After opening in January with *Tosca*, Sarah staged *Dalila* on 8 March, *La Samaritaine* on 25 March, the *Dame aux Camélias* on 9 April and *Hamlet* in a prose translation on 20 May. Bernhardt, who after her success in *Lorenzaccio*, had taken a fancy to male roles, played the Prince of Denmark and even the London critics, who saw her in July, were full of praise. Inspired by this success, Rostand started work on *L'Aiglon*, a drama about Napoleon's twenty-year-old son written especially for the fifty-two-year-old actress.

Paris was now gripped with excitement at the approach of a fateful event which was to be heralded in the greatest exhibition of all time: the twentieth century was on its way. Everyone existed in a state of hysterical euphoria: half of them realizing that their world was heading inexorably towards its end, the others sensing the approach of a great unknown future, into which they would have to throw themselves, whether they liked it or not. The old security, even though ossified and greedily gnawed away

on all sides, was none the less familiar territory, and now that it was about to collapse it left its opponents with a foreboding of embarrassed nakedness. The new century did not proclaim itself happily. March saw the massacre of Europeans in the Boxer Rising in China and on 11 October the Boer War broke out. The individual began to be unpleasantly aware that his privacy was no longer sheltered from the impact of global events. On a stormy morning, 30 July, Dreyfus was landed on the Breton coast by the steamer *Sfax*, brought back from Devil's Island to face a second court martial. Having been hermetically isolated from the rest of the world for five years, he had no idea that his case had split France and roused the conscience of the world, that Zola was battling for his rehabilitation and that prayers were said for him in every synagogue of the world. After hearing thirty-five witnesses for the defence and one hundred for the prosecution, the court again declared Dreyfus guilty by five votes to two. 'On a osé exécuter deux fois un innocent!' cried Mirbeau when he brought the unbelievable news to Sarah. Anti-French disturbances broke out in European and American towns. One hundred and fifty thousand demonstrators protested in Hyde Park. At the same time, on 12 August 1899, Déroulède, one of the leading anti-semitic agitators, was arraigned before the Supreme Court on a charge of conspiracy against the Republic. Racialism raged in the streets with the ferocity of the Deep South and the dull hatred of the Third Reich.

But the end of the century also saw the final development and exploitation of great inventions. Marconi was ready to send his first wireless signal across the ocean, Levegh made Paris–Toulouse with his racing automobile in 20 hours 44 minutes, the first cinematograph perform-

ances flickered away in stuffy café basements, and the bloated cigar of a dirigible airship successfully circled the Eiffel Tower.

It was fully in the spirit of this strangely confused time that Father, in spite of all the haze of mysticism, paid exuberant attention to the discoveries of modern science. In 1895 he met the Lumière brothers and, lured by the prospect of studying the movement of plants, he took part in their cinematographic experiments.

I saw that their invention had its possibilities [he once told me after showing me some old copies of phased plant movement]. But it posed new problems: how to compose a picture where the movement was genuine and the frame fictitious. This was entirely new ground well worth studying. One day I arranged a gathering at the Val de Grâce and, instead of the usual concert and recitation, showed various Lumière films. I think it was successful. Everyone realized that this was not just an amusing attraction as was usually believed, but the first halting steps of a new art. Then came the disaster at the charity bazaar which severely damaged the reputation of the film. To get as many people in as possible, the performance was given in a sort of shed with canvas hangings, an exceedingly dangerous place for the use of such highly inflammable material. Something happened to the apparatus, the film caught fire and in a moment the canvas and the bone-dry shed went up in flames. If people had kept calm, there need have been no disaster, but someone began shouting 'Sauvez-vous! Sauvez-vous!' and there was utter panic. In the darkness everybody rushed wherever he could, colliding, falling, running helplessly back and forth, and in a moment the entrance was completely blocked. Worst of all, the roof, made of tarred paper, caught fire, the tar began melting and dripped in huge burning drops on to the feathered summer hats and lace frills of the ladies, so that in no time the poor things were on fire and nobody could help them. Their gentlemen, who carried sticks, fought ruthlessly, hitting left and right, and forced their way out while those who were unarmed, stayed behind.

After this catastrophe, where members of one hundred and forty of the highest-ranking French families perished, film shows were strictly limited, but no regulations could hold back the cinematograph any more, just as fatal falls by airmen could not prevent other enthusiasts from striving to conquer the air.

In the field of aeronautics one of the most distinguished pioneers was another friend of Father's, Alberto Santos-Dumont, born in Brazil in 1873. From his earliest childhood, Santos-Dumont had felt an irresistible fascination for machines. At the age of seven he drove his first steam engine and at twelve, regularly drove the small train that transported material to and from his father's coffee plantation in the State of São Paulo. When he was eighteen, his family took him to Paris, 'Where,' as he used to quote, 'the good Americans go when they die.' A dedicated reader of Jules Verne, he believed that in France he would find many new inventions in the sphere of locomotion, automobiles, submarines and, in particular, dirigibles, but he was greatly disappointed to find French aeronauts using the same conventional type of balloon he had seen once or twice in São Paulo. Giffard, who had made his ill-fated attempt with a dirigible in 1852, nobody dared to emulate. Actually his system was somewhat hazardous. He propelled his airship by means of a steam engine.

Santos-Dumont was mad about aeronautics. He longed to be given a ride in a balloon, but when professional aeronauts demanded exorbitant prices he wisely resisted the temptation and focused his interest temporarily on automobiles. In 1892, aged nineteen, he bought the latest novelty, a three-wheeler, hired the Paris Vélodrome and

organized the first race of these short-lived ancestors of the sports car. The proprietor of the Vélodrome, however, suddenly got worried and made a last-minute attempt to call the race off, arguing that the steep curves would tilt the fuel in the carburettor, the motor would stall and the three-wheeler, losing speed, would overturn. Santos-Dumont was adamant. Despite all protests the race took place, and the three-wheelers roared gloriously to the finish.

Santos-Dumont did not go up in a balloon until 1897, when he discovered Monsieur Machuron, a constructor of flying machines, who was prepared to offer him a ride for only 250 francs. The procedure was rather intricate. It meant waiting for favourable weather, for a favourable wind, and hoping it would not change in the next four hours while the balloon was being filled with 750 cubic metres of gas. However, the intense pleasure of the flight was a rich reward for the intrepid aeronaut. Santos-Dumont described his surprise at the feeling of weightlessness when the balloon had no relative speed and seemed to be standing still in the motionless air. They went up in bright sunshine to ten thousand feet, nothing stirred, it was perfect calm, and the only sounds that reached them from far below were an occasional barking of a dog or the distant whistle of a train. They hovered over forests, fields and meadows, and when they rose even higher above the clouds, they savoured 'a wonderful sight. The sun cast the shadow of the balloon on this screen of dazzling whiteness, while our own profiles, magnified to giant size, appeared in the centre of a triple rainbow!'* Then they heard chimes announcing midday, coming up from the depths.

* *My Airships* by A. Santos-Dumont. London, Grant Richards, 1904.

They had taken along a small picnic lunch: hard-boiled eggs, cold roast beef, roast chicken, cheese, ice-cream, fruit, cakes, champagne, black coffee and Chartreuse. 'I was finishing my little glass of liqueur when the curtain suddenly fell on this wonderful stage setting of sunlight, cloud billows and azure. The barometer rose rapidly 5 millimetres, showing a sudden rupture of equilibrium and a swift descent.' They descended close to the ground and allowed themselves to be carried by the wind, skimming treetops and hedges. 'We had a sack of ballast at hand, and when some special obstacle rose in our path, like a tree or a house, we threw out a few handfuls of sand to leap up and pass over it.'

After this experience Santos-Dumont dedicated himself fully to aeronautics and immediately thought of his first innovation. In spite of anxious warnings from M. Machuron, he had a balloon constructed with extremely small capacity—120 cubic metres—and to the dismay of all professionals did not dangle helplessly in his miniature gondola, but happily and undisturbed explored from the air the surroundings of Paris. After a time, however, he felt lonely in his small balloon and ordered a bigger one for four people. Subsequently he took friends on board, organizing picnic parties in the air, until the whole thing nearly ended in disaster when the balloon was becalmed for four hours over Paris, losing height and unable to move from the alarming vicinity of the rooftops. A balloon evidently had to have its own propulsion if it was not to remain at the mercy of air currents. Santos-Dumont decided to proceed by trial and error. At a small workshop in the rue de Colisée he built his first dirigible fitted with two motors taken from the three-wheeler. His airship, shaped like a fat fish with pointed ends, was 75 feet long,

11 feet wide and weighed less than 60 lb. The motor, which was placed in the gondola, developed a thrust of 25 lb at 1200 revolutions.

Thanks to advice given him by experienced aeronauts, his first flight in the Jardin d'Acclimatation in 1898 was a complete failure. The free balloon usually took off down wind from the extreme edge of a large clearing in the park so that it had enough time to gain the necessary height before reaching the trees at the other end. 'In vain I explained that by placing myself "upstream" in the wind . . . I should inevitably risk precipitating the air-ship against the trees before I would have time to rise above them, the speed of my propeller being superior to that of the wind then blowing. All was useless. The aeronauts had never seen a dirigible balloon start off. They could not admit of its starting under other conditions than those of a spherical balloon . . . As I was alone against them all I had the weakness to yield.'

In a few moments he was hanging with his airship in the branches, but he had proved he was right. Two days later he was back in the Jardin d'Acclimatation, this time choosing his own starting point, but again the attempt was a miserable flop. The take-off went well, but when he got over Paris his cigar-shaped airship changed into a pocket knife and closed up.

'For the moment I was sure that I was in the presence of death . . . my sentiment was almost entirely that of waiting and expectation.

' "What is coming next?" I thought. "What am I going to see and know in a few minutes? Whom shall I see after I am dead?"

'The thought that I should be meeting my father in a few minutes thrilled me.'

The Val de Grâce image of a family hereafter apparently had in his case a calming effect.

He was saved by children playing on the Bagatelle common. The earth approached rapidly, the wind drove him against the threatening wall of houses, but the children grabbed the drag rope and pulled him down to safety.

The fault was in the gas not escaping evenly from all parts of the balloon at the same time, a fact he would have learned more easily at his desk than in the air. When he opened the valve to descend and the pot-bellied cigar began deflating, the remaining gas quite naturally collected in the middle at the highest point and the two empty ends performed the 'penknife trick'. Before he devised a system of keeping the pressure even during the descent, he ruined another airship, but by 1899 he was able to cruise at will over Paris, drawing crowds whenever he flew along the embankment and over the Champ-de-Mars.

By now several other adventurous spirits wished to emulate his example and in 1900, the industrialist Deutsch offered a prize of 100,000 francs to the first aeronaut to set off from St Cloud, circle the Eiffel Tower and return to the same spot in less than half an hour.

Santos-Dumont first made a tentative run, but failed. His rudder cable snapped and he had to come down at the Trocadéro where he borrowed a ladder, mended the cable and resumed his flight, cheered by a crowd of fascinated Parisians. But ill luck still pursued him on the first attempt for the prize. Instead of circumnavigating the Eiffel Tower he landed in a tree in Baron Rothschild's garden. Fortunately the accident had no serious consequences. Since he always flew in a black frock-coat with a lavallière neck-tie and a white chrysanthemum in his

buttonhole, he was able to join his host for a cup of tea without the least embarrassment. Princess Isabel, the daughter of the last Brazilian Emperor, Don Pedro II, who lived nearby in her small but distinguished *hôtel particulier*, was so moved by her compatriot's display of sang-froid that she sent him as a token of her admiration a medal which he wore ever after on his wrist as a talisman.

His next attempt was also no better than a near miss. He succeeded in circling the Eiffel Tower, but one of the gondola cables got caught up in the propeller and he crashed on the roof of the Hôtel Trocadéro. Three weeks later, however, on 19 October 1901, he had another airship ready, the 'Santos-Dumont 6', and with this he finally achieved victory, winning the Deutsch trophy. His small dirigible, equipped with a bicycle saddle instead of a gondola, became his favourite means of transport and with it he made his daily promenades over Paris and to the green banks of the Seine and Marne.

Santos-Dumont was not only a sportsman, but also a man of the world. This probably saved him from the narrow-mindedness of his rivals who laughed scornfully at every mention of heavier-than-air flying machines. In spite of all his successes with dirigibles, Santos-Dumont believed in wings. 'It is the most ordinary common sense. Does man fly? No. Does the bird fly? Yes. Then if man would fly, let him imitate the bird. Nature has made the bird and Nature never goes wrong. *I would believe in balloons if a bird were a large sack of air.*'*

* *My Airships*. In the English edition, which is deplorably translated from the original French, this italicized last sentence is reduced to nonsense. It has therefore been necessary for the sake of clarity, to depart from the published English text.

While Santos-Dumont was hanging his airships on the branches of trees and the population of Paris was distracting itself smashing windows at the British Consulate out of sympathy for the Boers, the World Exhibition was going up on both sides of the Seine, from the Champs-Elysées to the Champ-de-Mars.

This was a symbol [to quote Father] for the whole continent over a period of three or four years. Everything around me seethed with feverish preparations and excitement. What was I to exhibit? Everything that I could have ready by that time. A selection from my decorative work: about 25 panneaux, all the posters I had so far done for Sarah Bernhardt, calendars beginning with the first one I did for Lorilleux, illustrated books, *Ilsée, Au Son des Cloches de Noël et de Pâques*—and the new work which I had just finished—*Documents Décoratifs*—for the Librairie Centrale de Beaux Arts.

More and more frequently I was asked to design all sorts of objects in every type of material from wood, gold, ceramics to paper and tapestry. It was impossible to meet all these requests and I decided to publish a special work containing decorative elements and items where these elements could be used so that everybody would find what he wanted ready made. At the end there were two such works: *Documents Décoratifs* and, five years later, *Figures Décoratives*, and they were not my first works of this kind either . . . *Documents Décoratifs* contained a number of motifs, some of them in colour for two-dimensional and plastic exploitation. The enterprising publishers sold the work to schools and libraries of nearly all the countries of Europe, and I think it made some contribution towards bringing aesthetic values into the arts and crafts. Of course I imagined quite wrongly that now I would be left in peace. Not at all. I started getting even more requests from people who wanted jewellery or some other things that the others hadn't got. 'I saw in your book *Documents Décoratifs* a very nice pendant,' they wrote, 'I would like to have one like it—but a little different. Could you please design it for me?' Another wanted silverware—'the same, but a little different'. Another a vase; another a lamp. Soon I

became the victim of my own device. Besides—I had not found true satisfaction in work of this kind. I saw my path as lying elsewhere, somewhat higher. I was looking around for a means to spread light that would reach even into the remotest corners. I did not have to look long. The Lord's Prayer. Why not give its words pictorial expression? I discussed this with the publisher Piazza who wanted to follow up *Ilsée* with some other work of mine. He was delighted and I explained to him how I imagined the book: first the cover page with symbolic ornamentation, then the same ornaments, developed in a sort of variation around one line of the Prayer, the third page explaining in calligraphic writing the idea contained in that line, the fourth rendering this idea in a picture, and so on, line after line till the end. I immediately sat down and wrote the seven explanatory texts so that the literary side was ready for printing and I had only to design the ornamental papers and the pictures.

The Lord's Prayer and *Documents Décoratifs* rounded up the series of my works for the Exhibition. But now I began to be haunted by yet another thought: for the past five years my works had largely met the needs of day-to-day life, but the energy I had put into them had not been in proportion to their mission. From wallpaper to cutlery, from furniture and jewellery to decorative panneaux—everything had been given away to others, while the needs of my own nation had remained unanswered. That was why, on the threshold of the new century, I was desperately trying to discover how I could make even a modest contribution to my own people. In this dilemma kind destiny offered me a chance. Herr Moser, the Austrian representative for the World Exhibition, came to discuss with me his government's plans for the various displays and when we agreed on the general idea he told me Herr Hofrat Exner would be coming in the next few days to Paris to talk over the project with me in detail. When he arrived and we met at luncheon it turned out that Hofrat Exner not only wanted my advice but came to offer me the decorating of one whole pavilion. It was to be the pavilion of Bosnia and Hercegovina, the two provinces Austria had recently annexed and wished, therefore, to put before the public in the best possible light. Naturally I accepted with great pleasure. I

sketched out roughly how I saw the inside, and we parted satisfied, indeed delighted. Now I had to start digging up the little I knew about Bosnia and Hercegovina so as to get a clearer picture of my task. When we met a few days later, I was able to submit to Hofrat Exner my first sketches and the general division of the wall space. Herr Hofrat Exner and his suite were highly satisfied, and I got down to work. To begin with I had to make extensive research and a tour of the Balkans to collect first-hand impressions and all the necessary details. I was given a free railway ticket for the whole of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and I returned to Paris after ten days with my pocket full of sketches and observations. There I found Latif, a Bosnian servant, waiting for me in full costume provided by the Austrian government. He proved to be invaluable, particularly for making black coffee. All the necessary equipment for this exacting task he had brought with him in a neat bundle, displayed it in the studio and sat down cross-legged, waiting for my orders. I was not only very satisfied with my journey but also amazed. What I had been so hard looking for all this time I found among the Balkan Slavs. Right, I thought, before dedicating my work to my own people I shall work for the Southern Slavs. Herr Hofrat Exner could not have chosen better. Now off to hire a studio, cut the frames and mix the colours—eighteen months of work as sweet as honey were awaiting me. I found myself a studio near the Exhibition grounds, ordered the canvas from Holland, selected some of my pupils—six to begin with—and while they got the frames ready, mounted the canvas and gave the place a thorough cleaning, I drew the drafts for the various compositions. At the same time I did the small friezes in my own studio, so the work proceeded apace. Once again I was doing historical painting, but this time not about Germany but a brotherly Slav nation. Describing the glorious and tragic events in its history I thought of the joys and sorrows of my own country and of all the Slavs. And so, before I had completed the South Slav murals, I had made up my mind about my future big work which was to become 'The Slav Epic', and I saw it as a great and glorious light shining into the souls of all people with its clear ideals and burning warnings.

Many years later he described this decisive moment in detail when writing to one of his friends:

It was midnight, and there I was all alone in my studio in the rue du Val de Grâce among my pictures, posters and panels. I became very excited. I saw my work adorning the salons of the highest society or flattering people of the great world with smiling and ennobled portraits. I saw the books full of legendary scenes, floral garlands and drawings glorifying the beauty and tenderness of women. This was what my time, my precious time, was being spent on, when my nation was left to quench its thirst on ditch water. And in my spirit I saw myself sinfully misappropriating what belonged to my people. It was midnight and, as I stood there looking at all these things, I swore a solemn promise that the remainder of my life would be filled exclusively with work for the Nation.

Now [Father recalls in his memoirs] the entire Exhibition area was filled with buildings growing higher every day, and also the Bosnian pavilion had its walls up. That was when I was invited to Vienna to select items of contemporary Austrian art which I considered suitable for the Paris Exhibition. I went round studios for several days, choosing pictures, and I noticed that many artists were looking for a new way of expressing themselves. I referred to this in my speech during the big dinner arranged on the eve of my departure. I advised the responsible people to make full use of the present times which were favourable to discoveries of new trends and send art students out into the villages and the open country of the Alps and Tyrol where they could rinse their eyes with natural beauty before coming back to their studios in Vienna. After a holiday among the people in the mountains and among the vegetation of their nature they would return to the town imbued with its image and as a result would, instead of copying foreign art, produce their own, interpreting their own feelings in their own language.

Back in Paris work at the Exhibition was becoming hectic and I was overburdened with requests of all kinds. My art was *en vogue*, it had penetrated into the factories and workshops as 'le

style Mucha', and various items at the Exhibition were continually being seized to protect the original designs against counterfeiting. This, however, was beneficial only to the producers and even at my expense, since it was me who had to go through the warehouse to arbitrate on the imitations. And there really were a lot of them—in the architectural designs, in silver, glass, tapestries and jewellery. Naturally nobody paid any fines to me and after all, I did not care about money but about the precious time it took up. Towards the end, when the pavilion was ready and we were engaged on the decoration, I hardly went home at all. I had eight helpers now who did enlarging and groundwork, but I had to execute and complete the whole thing myself. Latif could hardly keep up making black coffee. I had not only the Bosnian murals—there was the preparation of the Exhibition of Austrian Art which I had selected in Vienna, and another one of Czech Art in Austria-Hungary, and yet another special exhibition of Parisian Czechs such as Brožík and Hynais. Everywhere I had to be represented by at least two or three pictures which I had still to complete, and I also had to prepare the catalogue for my own exhibition of lithographs. Besides, I was busy modelling the statue of Bosnia and Hercegovina which I started at Seysses' studio, and I had another statue to make for the Houbigant exposition. The perfumer was a good friend of mine and I promised it to him, unaware that I could be so hard pressed for time It was a bust of a woman, gilded and crowned with a diadem. I cannot rave about these glorious days. My only memory at mention of the World Exhibition is and will be exhaustion, utter weariness . . .

For those who were not engaged on the preparations, the World Exhibition was a gigantic wonderland, a stimulus to national pride and a victorious pageant of electric lighting. When all the fantastic gates were lit up and the pavilions and bridges lined with garlands of shining bulbs, man gazed at the newly-born twentieth century in dumb amazement but also with a renewed lust for life. If this was the foretaste of things to come, then glory to

the age of miracles! It was now three years since the establishment of radioactive properties of certain elements, and Mme Curie had just discovered radium. The road to Hiroshima was open.

20

THE Paris Exhibition assumed in human memory a place reserved for legends. No other similar event before or since has been given such exceptional treatment. There were many exhibitions and for a year, perhaps for two years, they managed to attract public interest, but other, more topical events followed, and all that remained of the past glory were a few pavilions going out of fashion.

This Exhibition alone, at the juncture of two epochs, and amidst the chaotic search for a new pattern of life, has made such a deep impression on human imagination. Intended to be a gateway to the future, it has become a monument to an era about to die. 'It produces the effect of a gigantic Babel,' wrote the strange philosopher and Celtic scholar, Doctor Favre, in a letter addressed to Father in May 1900. 'In this artificial city with its complex and confused appearance, all lines clash, planes collide, patterns criss-cross. It is a sequence of phantasmagoric pictures unfolding on the screen of a vertiginous fairyland cinematograph.' Further he writes, 'Yet in this Babel with its chaotic constructions there is impartial judgement to be rendered . . . Each nation, each race appeared of its own free will on the banks of the Seine to face the tribunal sitting in Paris.' This was probably what impressed itself so deeply on people's unconscious minds. The entire world assembled to render accounts at this historic moment. Each nation 'in this artificial valley of Josaphat',

as Favre puts it, 'pleaded its cause attempting to present the most convincing evidence, but the big book was there containing all the sins each was to answer for however numerous and noisy the clamouring crowd of its retinue might be.' Thousands of electric bulbs were ablaze, bands never stopped playing, fireworks changed the night sky into cascading waterfalls of stars, and the world was being judged by itself. Present and past clustered together pell-mell in buildings and whole towns representing countless architectural styles, temples devoted to secret Eastern rituals competed for the spectator's interest with the most daring technical achievements. The visitor could see a talking film or dancing girls from Indo-China, he could witness experimental wireless transmissions or Buddhist meditations in a pagoda. He could dream or let himself be overwhelmed by reality; absorb facts or feelings. He could also read the writing on the wall: the Kaiser's Reich arrived with a calculated demonstration of its technical and military power, and Japan, known only for her cherry blossoms, Chinese lanterns and silk dolls, presented herself with blast furnaces, shipyards and ironworks. The world, balancing on a needle poised on Europe, was badly shaken. One began to speak of the yellow peril. Under the streets of Paris rumbled the first Métro, burgeoning with Guimard's stations. Art Nouveau was triumphant. The various pavilions (Bosnia and Hercegovina occupied an illogically prominent position between the United States and Great Britain) eclipsed each other in agglomerations of turrets, stucco and statuary, but the pinnacle of this burlesque fantasy was the Palace of Electricity, adorning the Champ-de-Mars and the principal gateway near the Champs-Elysées. Whereas the former earned universal enthusiasm—spangled with its 5000 many-coloured bulbs,

it worked like an enormous silver-thread brooch—the triumphal arch was greeted with universal embarrassment.

> This gateway [wrote the *Petit Journal* in its guide to the Exhibition], whose appearance unfortunately has so little artistic quality, and which the Parisian wit immediately compared to a vast mobile fireplace, is composed of three immense arches surmounted by a dome studded with huge buttons of coloured glass. In front are two pylons of equal height—100 feet each and . . . dominating the whole, a statue 18 feet high representing a female Parisian which has incurred a great deal of criticism.

'Let us hasten to get through this door,' the paper went on to advise visitors. Today this lunatic mosque would probably amuse us much more than the pastiche of the Grand Palais. What a pity that despite all his friends' efforts Father could not build the Pavilion of Humanity which was to have stood on the site occupied by an enormous globe and was intended as a mystical monument to Man beaming wisdom into the whole world. All the plans, drawings and plaster models were ready—the front view resembled an extravagantly decorated paperweight—but the project was not realized, presumably because of its immense cost. Unlike the other forty-six pavilions this Museum of Man was to have been a permanent structure with a dome rivalling the highest buildings in the city bar the Eiffel Tower, and with a vast circular fresco arching over the main entrance. (This design alone was salvaged from the whole magnificent project. It became a decoration for a ladies' fan, inscribed 'Le vent qui passe emporte la Jeunesse'.) At this time of bold vistas into the future a book published several years before became deservedly one of Paris's best-sellers: *Le Vingtième Siécle* by the caricaturist Robida. Examining his illustrated

expedition into the year 1953, we can feel rather flattered, like some exotic creature as yet undescribed, peering into a textbook containing hypothetical statements about himself. Not all of it is ridiculous. Overpopulated towns with enormous skyscrapers in Tudor-German-Swiss style the largest of which, made of *papier aggloméré*, has eighteen storeys. Life is mostly lived in the air and under the ground. Fantastic airships fly about with hotels suspended from their bellies adorned with a mass of palms, turrets and banners. Delicious girls with ribbons in their hair pedal away on fishlike aerial bicycles, and the Tour St Jacques is hung with a quantity of these fat, hovering fishes numbered and tied with strings to the Gothic gargoyles signposted 'Station d'Aérocabes'. High above the mountains float balloons with comfortable suspended hospitals—'Cures d'air dans la montagne'—there are delightful 'aero-yachting' excursions with beauties in knee-length striped bathing costumes, fishing from gondolas, grazing the frothy waves. The gramophone, telephone and telephoneoscope, called the 'théâtre chez soi', have become essential parts of daily life. Their exploitation is manifold: from the strictest privacy of bedrooms with ladies in their négligées observing scenes enacted on enormous egg-shaped, gilt-framed screens, to social events involving many ladies and gentlemen watching the eggs through binoculars. One illustration even shows coloured gentlemen in evening dress viewing the tribal dances of their less civilized kin. The public telephone resembles a shower with an earpiece, and the combination of the two inventions has produced the telephonovision, both inter-town and inter-continental, as can be seen from the picture of a bearded gentleman in a topee who, overcome with homesickness in the Colonies, visits the *bureau télèphono-*

scope where for a small charge the oval on the wall shows him his wife and baby in a most touching family scene. The gramophone with a frilled lampshade standing as an essential item on the family breakfast table or placed nonchalantly in the boudoir of Madame Lorris is evidently an even more ubiquitous aid than the tape recorder. Man in 1953 lives through rebellions and wars, undertakes expeditions to the moon, reclaims the Sahara—the Sphinx is overgrown with clematis—and rain and sun can be had for the ordering at various distribution centres. Everything is suffused with a warm and gay social atmosphere: at the departure 'de la première commission scientifique et colonisatrice' to the moon, the greater part of the crew are seen standing on the roof of their inter-planetary metal fish, waving their hats to the crowd which has gathered to bid them farewell. The greatest sensation of the new age is, of course, the emancipation of women and the short skirt—the 1953 fashion in no way differs from 1890, the ladies are still wearing stays, bustles, ribbons and hats; but their very osé frilled skirts reveal a charming leg in black stockings almost to the knee. Men's fashions have also become shorter. For some mysterious reason, the gentlemen of 1953 wear plus-fours with dinner jackets. Women have become judges, solicitors and doctors. This gives rise to various complications, as can be seen from the illustration of a manacled gentleman with a beard kneeling enraptured before a buxom beauty in a barrister's gown; the lady judges and scientists are in principle hideous, the only exception being Madame la Préfet who is seen receiving a footman bringing briefs for her perusal as she stands in a laced peignoir in an interior à la Sarah.

M. Robida is not far off the mark as far as the horrors of war are concerned: 'Le monitor sousmarin surpris par

les torpedistes' shows a submarine in the form of a cylindrical fish, and the torpedo is steered by men armed with long guns, sitting astride outsize metal herrings. Robida also predicted chemical artillery, Negroes quarrelling in Parliament and concentrations of invasion units 'of Tartar armies on the Danube under the orders of the chief mandarin engineer'. The invasion is crushed, but on the whole M. Robida sees the future of the world as pretty black; people eat at pharmaceutical restaurants, the food being doled out to them from enormous retorts; little children with huge heads study physics in their cradles, and Europe is horribly over-populated. Nor is the situation alleviated by the construction of a sixth continent with the aid of numerous crankshafts, searchlights and boats. Robida's gloomy forecasts are summarized in the final allegory of a blonde girl, weary to death, sitting on a half-demolished Gothic building which is being busily dynamited by two men in peaked caps. A frightened horse runs off down a slope, harnessed to a cart loaded with books entitled 'Tradition' and 'Histoire'. Above this dismal end of an epoch rises grey death, with a retort instead of a head, a strong-box for her chest and two cogwheels for her breasts.

On 15 March, a month before the opening of the World Exhibition, the Sarah Bernhardt Theatre presented the première of *L'Aiglon*, the patriotic climax of Rostand's career, written for Sarah and France at the summit of their glory. The audience hailed the play with rapture. The applause from the stalls and boxes glittering with the tiaras of the Napoleonic aristocracy and the Légion d'Honneur produced no less than twenty curtain calls and,

long after the gala public had left, clapping and shouts of 'bravo!' continued from the balconies. Even though the critics who turned up *en masse*, except for Francisque Sarcey who was dead, had sobered up by the morning, but their reviews could in no way diminish the popularity of the play. 'One admires without emotion,' wrote Jules Renard in *Le Journal*. 'Like watching a magnificent waterfall: one doesn't want to stay too long.' All the same, the first fortnight showed a net profit of 560,000 which by 25 September had grown to two million francs.

It is not quite clear why Father's *Aiglon* poster should have been so unlike the others and so unsuccessful. It is conceived in breadth, reproduced in crude colours and, apart from the text, consists only of a rather clumsy three-quarter portrait of the Aiglon. Clearly this was not the original intention as can be seen from his various preparatory drawings of Sarah in the uniform and the familiar defiant posture of the young duke. The only possible explanation might be that in the general rush preceding the Exhibition the poster was not ready in time and the printers used instead an unfinished sketch for the programme cover which was very unartistically enlarged and transferred by lithographers onto the stone.

In November of the same year Sarah once again set off on a tour of the United States. This time her repertoire included *L'Aiglon*, specially adapted for the American public: the soldiers killed in the battle of Wagram were gloriously resuscitated in Act 5 and to swell their ranks the production made a very enterprising use of film. All the members of Sarah's court came to see her off—Lalique, Clairin, Mucha, Morand, Reynaldo Hahn, Rostand, actors, actresses and the English dentist who in her absence was looking after her lion's teeth. All over the

house stood the trunks and theatre hampers which the maids and wardrobe attendants packed with the costumes for *Tosca*, *Hamlet*, *Lorenzaccio*, *La Dame aux Camélias*, wigs, make-up, tiaras, jewellery and perfumes. In her personal baggage Sarah took only the essentials—120 pairs of shoes and a small number of evening gowns. 'You can't get anything over there,' she kept exclaiming. 'It's virgin forest!'

Meanwhile in a cheap, dingy hotel on the left bank of the Seine Oscar Wilde was dying, a social and artistic wreck. Sarah, who had written him in one of her letters, 'We may none of us always keep constant company with our equals, my dear', had not seen him since his disgrace. When she returned from America, where she had a guaranteed minimum of 5,000 dollars per performance, Oscar Wilde was dead, and it was only twenty years later that the treetops of the Père Lachaise cemetery united them, spreading the shade over their adjacent graves.

The year 1900, so rich in sensations of all kinds, witnessed a new upsurge of anarchist activity—on 22 July, Umberto I, King of Italy, was assassinated; on 2 August, the Shah of Persia only just escaped an attempt on his life in Paris, and in November Sipido tried to shoot the Prince of Wales in Brussels. The atmosphere was not any healthier for rulers in the following year either. On 22 January Queen Victoria died, on 5 August the Prussian Empress, Frederika, and on 14 September the American President, McKinley, was assassinated in Buffalo. 1900 did not happen only at Maxim's and the Moulin Rouge.

By now the name of Mucha was generally identified with Art Nouveau. Since 1897 one could read in the

advertising column: 'A avoir affiche murale pour le journal le Franc-Parler, composition genre Mucha, signé C. Bétout.' After the publication of *Documents Décoratifs*, the imitations had grown to such an extent that it was practically impossible to distinguish a plagiary from mere stylistic dependence. Moreover Father often helped his weaker pupils and friends drawing their design for them, with the result that even experts arrived at rather amusing conclusions. There was his old friend, Atché, who drew several 'Mucha posters' before finding more profitable employment as manager of the Nice casino. His 'Job' poster, a very successful variation on the so-called 'small' Job by Mucha, was attributed in the catalogue for the 1961 exhibition 'Les Affiches de la Belle Epoque' to a Spanish sculptor named Atché y Fané, apparently the only Atché listed in any reference book, and dated 1889. This would have meant that Atché invented a very typical Mucha design almost ten years earlier. In 1902 Clairin designed a poster for *Fédora* which is still being attributed to Mucha even in quite serious publications. Some designers, however, shamelessly copied his work on to glass, mosaics, and wall paper: a few details altered, and the design went into mass-production under their name. A good example of such adaptations can be seen at the Restaurant Julien, 16 rue du Faubourg St Denis, which has its Art Nouveau interior miraculously preserved in perfect condition. The walls of the dining-room are decorated with large majolica panels, signed 'Tretzel', two of which are just slightly altered copies of 'Winter' and 'Summer' from 'The Four Seasons' and the third a replica of the *Médée* poster.

Father now found himself in a dilemma. After his soul-searching night in his studio he was resolved to devote

himself to more serious work, but at the same time his popularity had reached such proportions that it was impossible for him with the best will in the world to hold out against the rush of orders. He temporized, drawing all the numerous magazine covers, posters and panneaux—some of his best works like the 'Four Precious Stones' and 'Four Stars'—and yet devoting whatever time he could to symbolic compositions and portraits. He was split into two or even three or four personalities: he had acquired a liking for sculpture and was extending his work in jewellery.

He first started modelling a year or two before the World Exhibition, but when he won a bronze medal with his statue, sculpting became, as everything he did, the subject of his absorbed curiosity. He became a close friend of Rodin, who not only encouraged him in this new departure but also stimulated his determination to get rid of the offensive obligations to Champenois. Mucha wanted to be a philosopher in colour or stone—the Pavilion of Man for the World Exhibition would have offered him precisely such an opportunity—but instead he modelled imaginary females for Houbigant and Bosnia-Hercegovina. Another opportunity, again non-philosophical, was offered him by the goldsmith Georges Fouquet. Alphonse Fouquet, his father, born in 1828, had come to Paris in 1840 where he not only learned the goldsmith's trade but drew and wrote verses. When he eventually set up a workshop he became one of the exclusive jewellers working from his own designs for individual customers. Considering himself primarily an artist he was deeply grieved when his son turned into what he called a shopkeeper, deciding after 1900 to open up a fashionable boutique opposite Maxim's in the rue Royale where he would both make and sell jewellery, designed by leading

artists. As a convinced pioneer of Art Nouveau he wanted, like Bing, to have his premises in the most up-to-date style and commissioned Mucha to design both the interior and the front of the shop. This gave Father a wide field of work in all kinds of materials from metal to glass. The workshop, lit by the permanent glow of furnaces, became a natural source of light, illuminating from behind a bronze peacock whose spread tail formed the back wall of the shop and glittered with countless eyes of coloured glass. The furniture, carved in simple lines, was of rare woods, there was a fountain with goldfish and a bronze nude, stained glass panneaux in the walls and a mosaic floor. A lot of the jewellery on display was made to Mucha's designs, among the works of other artists, including Grasset and Vever. This was probably when Fouquet produced the most beautiful item deriving from their co-operation, the famous snake bracelet made for Sarah Bernhardt, coiling round the wrist and attached with a golden chain to a ring in the form of a smaller snake on the index finger. It is said that it was made in such an elaborate way to cover Sarah's arthritic wrist.

Such a wide range of work—from architecture to jewellery, posters to sculpture, stained glass windows to illustrations, pastels, oils and miniatures—belonged not only to the artistic confession of Art Nouveau but corresponded to Mucha's encyclopaedic spirit. Although he never read novels, except *The Three Musketeers* and Jules Verne, he was a great reader of scientific books and gradually acquired detailed knowledge of every useful subject ranging from anatomy, optics, history and physics—these being directly connected with his work—to constructional technique and astronomy. In his spare time his favourite reading was Webster's Dictionary; he was

always learning something, always trying to push back as far as possible the frontier of the unknown which surrounded him so closely. In so far as he had any particular model whom he admired and respected, it was Leonardo da Vinci: architect, engineer, inventor, philosopher and also painter.

The daily newspapers were now beginning to pay attention to his philosophical aim, but it was just such articles as the thorough analysis by R. Candiani in *Independence Belge* (3 June 1900) that made him more impatient than satisfied. 'If we examine merely the contours in these works we shall quickly arrive at the conclusion that here is the master draughtsman of our age,' wrote Candiani.

> And yet he did all that could be done to spoil his hand. He began by studying at the Academy of Art in Munich which, as a depressing influence, is in no way inferior to similar establishments in Paris. He was not even afraid to study at the Académie Julian and the studios of Lefebvre and Boulanger. To resist such a regime he needed to be gifted with exceptional qualities . . . With regard to his purity of line, M. Charles Seignobos has rightly said that his like has not been since the Renaissance. What Mucha has retained from Munich is doubtless his craft. He needs it, it is true, and plenty of it, to do his draped fabrics, to give life to a hand or to effect a foreshortening . . . Up to now, to our knowledge, he has only twice made a solemn sacrifice to this old idol: two masterpieces which can only be compared with the drawings of the Renaissance masters . . . One of these two *raccourcis* is well known since it occupies the lower part of the *Médée* poster. The other has only been published as a design for a stained glass window; an archangel, armed with a shining lance, descends from the sky above the figure of Saint Barbara in ecstasy; the torso of this ephebe with spread wings is orientated perpendicularly to the spectator, and his legs are only half inflected. At the bottom of the page there is a kind of flash-back:

a pagan, already struck down, also lies perpendicularly to the spectator. This double *raccourci* gives the composition as a whole a surprising depth. We have spoken of the hand. Nobody today can draw a hand like Mucha. It is claimed that his hands are always and everywhere Sarah Bernhardt's and it is true that the studio in the rue du Val de Grâce abounds with casts that mostly seem to have been taken from the same wrist. Which means that the hand of the great tragédienne should be very beautiful—when drawn by Mucha . . . For a long time he had to make his living by doing pictures for New Year annuals and children's books . . . Then an intelligent editor . . . M. Armand Colin . . . decided to entrust him with a mission for which he seemed little fitted, namely in collaboration with Rochegrosse, to illustrate the scenes and episodes in the *History of Germany* by Professor Seignobos. Mucha suddenly blossomed forth as a remarkable historical painter. He has been accused of overgracefulness: yet he juggled with horror. He has been declared to be incapable of drawing human figures that were not virtually petrified: yet he launched into a bewildering debauch of movement. In his 'Defenestration of Prague' and especially in his 'Victory of Julian over the Alemanni' there is an intensity of life which no other artist has ever surpassed. His 'heads' have been called conventional, his 'costumes' whimsical, and his 'surroundings' imprecise, right through his career: yet he was rigorous enough in his reconstitution to satisfy the most meticulous of archaeologists . . .

Candiani then comes to the posters which he considers to be the climax of Mucha's work.

The poster for *Gismonda* caused the critics to use a great deal of ink and Mucha's colleagues a great deal of saliva. The man in the street admired it, art dealers sniffed it out, collectors looked upon it as sacred . . . There, then, is our most holy trinity of poster artists. Chéret, Grasset, Mucha, they can only be listed in alphabetical order. As for finding any comparison between them, this would be criminal, or as good as criminal. Each has his strictly personal manner, without the least point of contact with the other two. And each has his disciples. Mucha's dis-

Mucha with Rodin on a tour of Bohemia, 1902

Maruška at Mucha's studio, Paris 1903

ciples are now threatening to multiply beyond all limits. Where now does one see anything but his stars and macaroni?!

This, then, was how Mucha appeared to the partisans of Art Nouveau at the turn of the century. Like Hans Andersen, who had always hoped that his novels and not his fairytales would make him immortal, he decided with a sigh that he must acknowledge all this unwelcome admiration with a big dinner party at the Val de Grâce.

I had invited more than seventy guests and had to use not only my own studio but also my neighbours' rooms. In those days there was no electric light in the building and, as I wanted the dinner to be really festive in character, I asked if the electric current could be brought to the house. I waited for a good week before anybody came round, and then it was a Saturday and the place full of visitors. The official from the company which carried the miracle of light all over Paris—in those days Paris did not extend beyond the inner town—informed me that the last place to have been put on the system was Boulevard St Germain and presented me with an estimate of 2500 francs for bringing the current to my house. This seemed rather a lot for lighting up our plates and I asked him why. He pulled out the plans. To bring light to my studio, they would have to continue the cables all the way from the Boulevard St Germain along the entire Boulevard St Michel up the rue du Val de Grâce. I thanked him, explaining that the result was not worth the candle and that I would meanwhile manage with acetylene. It, too, was good, especially as our society was brilliant enough. All my publishers came—Piazza, Bourrelier, Jouvet, Champenois, Emil Lévy, the paint manufacturers Lorrilleux and Freund-Deschamps, Doctor Favre, the expert in Celtic monuments, Ginisty, the manager of the Théâtre Odéon, Marc Legrand, poet of the Quartier Latin, Colarossi, proprietor of the Académie, the painters, Jan van Beers, Detaille and Ary Renan, Sansboeuf, the mayor of the Champs-Elysées district, Dosset, the Mayor of Paris, the actors Guitry and Mme Gagneur, the goldsmith Fouquet, my old friends Fries, Mme de Bufon, Marcel Luguet, Frédéric Loliée,

Chincholle, Edouard Schuré, Lorédan, Le Foyer, Chéradam, Duberry and many, many others. After the dinner there was a concert and recitation with soloists from the Orchestre Colonne and actresses from the Parisian theatres. Finally, friend Widhopf took off his jacket and performed a Cossack dance while I played the guitar.

21

For some time Father's work had been becoming increasingly wistful and melancholy, the exact opposite of his cheerful, optimistic temperament. This might well be a purely subjective impression had he not written his own comments to some of the panneaux. About 'Music' from 'The Four Arts' he wrote: 'In the harmony of the summer evenings bathed in moonlight, it is not only the melodious trilling of the nightingales that we hear: there is also the joyous music—the far away echo of days past which our remembering soul seems to see again', and about 'Poetry': 'The approach of twilight guides the poetic soul towards the ideal shores of dream. Contemplating the star rising there low down in the sky, one's melancholy lingers long in the sadness of the waning day.'

Reports had been appearing in the Press which wounded him with their injustice. 'When one has come to occupy a place and acquire a reputation like Mucha's,' wrote the *Estampe Moderne*, 'one should neglect the commercial side and aim exclusively to produce art and the truth.' Nobody knew this better than Mucha, but he was caught in the trap of contracts, obligations and financial difficulties. 'Where have all my earnings gone?' he wrote.

> Given away. All just given away. How bitterly I feel this terrible fault that I do not know the value of money. How much I could have saved during the years when I was famous, not only in Paris but in the whole world! But I can't do that, and it is a

matter of painful regret. Friends treated me like a bank. This one couldn't pay the rent. I gladly helped him. Another wanted to go for a holiday—I helped him too. Once two young men came to me—it was a Saturday and they called me away from my guests. Poor chaps—two waiters, one of them a Czech applying for a job at the Grand Hotel. He was sure to get it, he said, if he had a dinner jacket for the first few days. So I lent him everything—including shirt and collar—and he even came back up the stairs to say he needed a tie. I do not know if he got the job, but he did not return the dinner jacket. Sometimes it was merely a trifle. Ženíšek drops in. 'I'm going to get married. She's a Greek.' I say: 'Has she got any money?' 'No, she hasn't, but I haven't either, so we'll put it together.' Having evidently thus accomplished the necessary formalities he goes. A week later, along he comes again with a parcel under his arm. 'I'm going to get married.' 'Yes, I know, you told me.' 'See,' he says, 'I'm bringing her a present. A pound of sugar. Better than coming empty-handed.' He stands there a moment. 'Only I haven't got a collar.' So I give him a collar, and off he goes. One day, Vochoč, the painter, turned up. 'I'm going to get married.' He was recovering from an operation, they had taken out his kidney, and he had no furniture. 'At least a bed, if you've got it.' So I gave him a bed, a wide Empire one, and on that bed and his one kidney he got married. Sardou did things differently. Once, when I was at his place, a carpenter arrived to mend a shelf in the bookcase. He tapped away for a bit, and the job was done. 'C'est fini,' he says. 'How much?' 'Forty francs.' Sardou frowns. 'A bit steep, isn't it?' The carpenter shrugs his shoulders. 'Ah, mon cher monsieur, il faut vivre.' 'Are you sure?' says Sardou.

I never could keep accounts. What I earned I put away in a drawer, and anybody who wanted went and helped himself, even without my knowing. Sometimes I came and found nothing there. Never mind, I said to myself, there will be some later on, and so I didn't worry.

He did not worry, but subconsciously he became more uncertain and distressed. He was over forty and his youth, when he could have put something by, had changed into

the mature age of unavoidable decisions. He saw his friends dying. The robust Brožík whom he admired had died, a mere ten years older than himself.

> The last few months of his rich life were very tragic. At the height of his artistic career he had become an example of integrity and national zeal, to which he devoted all his strength. I well remember him telling me about his latest order for Vienna to commemorate the marriage of Crown Prince Rudolf to the Belgian Princess Stefanie. He spoke about the dimensions of the canvas, the articulation of the composition, the number of figures, and sometimes it seemed as though he was overwhelmed by the work. His wife, too, said that it would be his last. Often he had to leave off for a whole day and shortly after completing the picture he died. We accompanied him to St Honoré's Church and then on the funeral procession right across Paris to the Père Lachaise Cemetery where his grave was adorned for all time with the finest of all monuments—the love of his nation.

Marold, his close friend, and Colonel de Rochas were also dead. People around him were imperceptibly changing and along with them the entire era. He began to feel an acute need for contact with his homeland, not merely in thought, but physically.

A welcome opportunity presented itself. The Prague Fine Arts Society, 'Manes', had arranged a Rodin exhibition for the summer of 1902, and Father gladly accepted the suggestion that he should accompany his friend to Prague.

It was a festive return to his homeland. Everywhere they went—Father naturally insisted on showing Rodin his native Moravia—they were acclaimed by crowds of people with bouquets of flowers and banners. Rodin, who hated pomp, began to fear every stop.

> We sat next to one another in the crowded train approaching Brno. After plains and lush meadows the countryside began to

rise into dear little hills clustering around us, until we found ourselves amidst high walls of rock which developed into grim, awesome ravines and bottomless precipices. To arrive here and look these monsters in the mouth was our aim on this day.

The train stopped at a little station at the foot of the rocky giants, we got out, but there, to our horror, we found a complete small army of smartly dressed firemen, standing in three ranks, and something else which filled Rodin with even more dread: speeches! He hated speaking to order. He intended avoiding this catastrophe by mumbling a few words of thanks into his beard and shaking hands with the speaker, but this was to ask for the worst. In a flash 500 hands went up, impatiently waiting for Rodin to shake them. And this actually happened to the thunderous applause of all present.

They carefully avoided any further celebrations and while crowds of people were making their way to the heights where a complete fiesta had been organized, with stalls laden with food and drink, Rodin, Mucha and two other friends remained at the bottom of the canyon, hidden behind bushes until the people began to disperse at sunset.

In Prague the onslaught by admirers was even more concentrated. On arrival Mucha and Rodin succeeded in slipping into the hotel, which was right opposite the station, 'without bloodshed', and looked forward to a quiet rest.

We had rooms next to one another, so we lay on our beds with the doors open. Rodin must have been considerably disturbed because after a while he suggested we should walk around the rooms a bit. I got up and we took a little stroll in our nightshirts, but soon Rodin began to be rather worried because there was a gathering noise outside. Suddenly he grabbed my sleeve. From the street there came a mighty roar like an explosion: 'Vive Rodin! Vive la France!' No chance of a rest now. Rodin rushed away from the window and from that moment avoided it like the plague, giving it a wide berth.

However, his visit to an East Moravian village where they went to see that gay folklore artist, Úprka, who had been a fellow-student of Mucha's at Munich, brought Rodin compensation.

> On the village green a group of lads spruced up in their festive costumes and riding beribboned horses was waiting for us to bring us triumphantly to Joseph's house. They took us straight into the garden where we settled down under the fruit trees. The local band was playing among the bushes and a bevy of girls in colourful kerchiefs and embroidered costumes handed round glasses. We ate and drank and embraced one another. Rodin, moved to tears, pressed my hand and kept repeating that he'd stay here till the end of his days. I had not expected so much natural beauty. The girls brought more and more wine and it felt like being in the gardens of Elysium. All we wanted was that the sun should never go down but stand still above us, as we lay on the grass, as it did in the time of Gideon.

The journey ended in Prague where the National Theatre put on a performance of the opera *The Dogheads*. Young people had travelled up from all over the country to catch a glimpse of Rodin. 'I am terribly annoyed,' wrote a twenty-year-old student at the College of Arts and Crafts, Maruška Chytilová, to her friend. 'I went specially to Prague to see Rodin, but I kept looking only at Mucha.' A year later she was to meet him again, this time in Paris, without any pangs of conscience.

In spite of all the celebrations and expressions of admiration, the journey to Prague had results that were the exact opposite of what Mucha had expected. He had hoped to establish permanent relations with Czech artists and, considering himself to be one of them, everywhere expressed his views quite frankly, praising, criticizing and, above all, warning against copying foreign artists. 'Everywhere I see the same aping of Vienna, Munich, Paris,' he

said. But the Prague artists took offence and declared cold war on him.

Although otherwise modest and undogmatic, Mucha was uncompromisingly militant in his opinions on art. He would not force them on anyone, but he neglected no opportunity of stating his point of view, undeterred as to the possible results. In the same year as he and Rodin went to Prague, the Mayor of Paris, Dosset, asked him if he would do a research into Parisian schools and draw up proposals for a reform in the teaching of art subjects. This was a problem which had been preoccupying Father for a long time and he gladly accepted, in spite of all his other commitments. After a number of visits to secondary and elementary schools, he produced a detailed, twenty-six-page report, setting forth his views on the state of art as a whole. 'France owes the world,' he wrote, 'a light in everything, particularly in art; but instead of the radiant torch of past centuries, there is today the doubtful blinking of a wretched hand-lantern—and even that has been lit elsewhere than at the home of the French spirit.'

Such a harsh judgement stemmed from his national conception of art:

> What is the spirit of art? It is the faculty of perceiving the emotions and translating them by the most appropriate means. The artist is one who effects this translation of emotions . . . by personal means, invented by himself, issuing from his individuality . . . There is therefore no such thing as international art. Such art can always only be the victory of the stronger and the absorption of the weaker.

He viewed the contemporary scene with gloomy disapproval: 'Life today is a smoky hotel which is very expensive into the bargain. One pays to enter, one pays to go out, not counting what one pays when one is inside.

Even art has to suit the requirements of the maîtres d'hotel.'

On the question of art being useful, which ever since William Morris had been the fundamental issue, he was now quite clear: 'One must distinguish between art for art's sake, and art for exploitation by industry. The second should contain the first, but the first should not be invaded by the second.'

In his criticism of individual schools, only the Ecole Pilou came through unscathed. 'The Ecole Estienne is standing guard over a corpse . . . It is good to cultivate tradition in art, but at the same time . . . the tradition must be that of the art of your ancestors and one must wish to conserve life by helping forward its organic evolution.'

In the teaching of applied art he saw two main problems. Either the practical, craft-training predominated, in which case the pupil could best be trained as an apprentice in a workshop, or it was the exact opposite, 'which is more serious. The pupil having absorbed all sorts of more or less useful knowledge is far from anxious to look upon himself as a simple artisan and aims at the pretensions of being an artist . . . which can prepare him for nothing but disappointment and misery.'

His sober analysis of a situation which undoubtedly hastened the decline of Art Nouveau ends with words that sound disquietingly prophetic:

> I ought also to mention the school from the purely social point of view. It is within the school that youth is expected to learn something useful for its existence and for society—this youth which, thanks to the use of machines, was deprived of apprenticeship and of the useful purpose it gave to their most impressionable years. Today legions of children are being thrown on the streets, no one is willing to take charge of them, they find

support only in each other, form gangs and thus become the terrible sore of our modern towns.

Since he had been considered competent to state his opinions in France, he naturally assumed the right to speak to his own people on similar problems. The situation which he had found in Prague had exasperated him and embittered him.

At that time [he wrote later], a dangerous obstacle practically stopped the advance of our art towards its national identity.

Until then, whenever Austria exhibited at international exhibitions in Vienna, Paris or elsewhere, the works of art were grouped according to the four main nationalities: German, Hungarian, Polish and Czech. It usually happened that the works of the Poles, Czechs or Hungarians attracted more interest than those of the German artists, and it was mainly the Slavs who gained most of the medals and awards. The last time this happened was at the Paris Exhibition in 1900.

Of course, such a situation seemed unacceptable and humiliating to Austria. The matter was taken in hand by a leading official in the Ministry of Education who wasted no time in arriving at a solution. Realizing that decentralization was harmful to Vienna, he simply centralized it and established a uniform Austrian art.

It so happened that at this time the European Congress of Teachers of Drawing—teachers in all schools from elementary to arts and crafts colleges and fine arts academies—was due to meet at Berne in Switzerland. This was duly exploited by Herr Hofrat Exner. He sent as official representatives to the Congress two art teachers who were to take careful note of all new trends discussed. On their return the delegates were given an office at the Ministry and ordered to work out a syllabus for the teaching of art in all Austrian schools, incorporating elements derived from the whole of Europe. When this was done teachers from all over the Monarchy were summoned to Vienna to learn the new curriculum. After going through a test, they returned to their schools to introduce the new Austrian art. Woe to the

country or nation that based its art on old national traditions! Such traditions had to be uprooted so that the lifeless Austrian Esperanto could be put in their place. What happened in our country was practically the murder of art. To ensure that the new seed should take root in Bohemia, government supervision was established and our art dragged to the scaffold. To stifle the living rich fount of folk art in Bohemia and Moravia, Vienna devised a society called the 'Wiener Werkstätte'. This society set about systematically denationalizing and also exploiting the world-famous embroiderers of northern Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia. They organized them and put them to turning out the Esperanto designs cooked up in Vienna . . . In twenty years of service to the foreign master and foreign models, the old, original tradition and the ancient, unadulterated, exquisite forms were almost forgotten. The College of Arts and Crafts, the Academy of Fine Arts and all similar institutions were poisoned with these foreign influences which have no value at all for our art . . . It is here that we have to seek the beginning of the decline of art in our country. Robbed of tradition, anchorless, immature, it fumbles about in all directions, spies into every open window and clutches on to anything new that crops up among our neighbours . . . When in fifty years a historian comes to write the history of art, he will drily observe that since 1900 the Czech nation has had no art of its own.

These are the kind of words that Mucha used to the Czech artists when he and Rodin visited Prague. In his national enthusiasm he forgot that he was not in France where, in spite of all the xenophobia and national and political antagonism, Jaurès could silence the protests of the Left during a performance of *Le Passant* by the anti-Dreyfusard Coppé: 'Quiet! Respect the work of a poet!'

22

In 1903 the first motor-car reached New York from San Francisco, Orville Wright flew his first 120 yards in a heavier-than-air machine, the United States occupied the Panama Canal zone, and Alexander I of Serbia was murdered with his wife and twenty other courtiers. Paris, until then disposed to admire the frills and black stockings of the cancan, reeled under the impact of America. 'Paris is dancing the cake-walk,' cabled the Czech correspondent Hladík to his Prague paper in alarm.

> Adieu, old French gaiety. Hide thy face, O Republic, created by the wit of Voltaire and the songs of Béranger . . . What is this cake-walk? Savage somersaults, monkey grimaces, the gracefulness of flirting chimpanzees. The melodies are indeed most provoking. The primitive rhythm has the intoxicating quality of alcohol and the vulgar sensuality of a street urchin. When dancing, the man wriggles his body grotesquely and kicks with his legs, the woman, bending her body backwards, parodies with American provocativeness a belly-dance. Such are the Elks who first brought the new dance to the Nouveau Cirque, the Elks, a scrawny, bizarre pair, he with the pale face of a jockey-pierrot, she resembling a scraggy bacchante of the Salvation Army.

Worse was to come.

> The redecorated Moulin Rouge . . . banished the cancan dancer from the heights of Montmartre and introduced an orchestra of portly Tyroleans. Paris, which but recently had booed *Tannhäuser* and unleashed anti-German disturbances at

performances of *Lohengrin*, now tamely listens to the yodelling Tyroleans and an orchestra in leather breeches.

The tempo of Parisian life in the new century quickened.

Countless vehicles hurtle through the streets [Hladík continued], carriages of coquettes and ladies, elegant broughams of ministers, actresses, stockbrokers, droshkies, cabs and gigs, red, white, blue and even green automobiles, enormous buses, bicycles and, among them, a mounted guard galloping along in his cuirassier's helmet, the relay from the President's Office or a ministry, carrying an important document or possibly a pink envelope from a young secretary.

The time of inexorable changes set in, but in the jungle of chasubles, tropical plants and Chinese draperies in the rue du Val de Grâce the incense still burned and from the pale silk in golden frames the tender souls of flowers still gazed with their dreamy eyes. There was now an additional item—skulls. Father needed animals' bones for some drawing and asked the assistance of the eminent Professor Hlava, who was then the leading expert on anatomy at the University of Prague. Hlava promptly sent him an enormous crate, full of pig, horse, cow and sheep skulls, which Father for lack of a better place hung up on the walls near the ceiling. Once they were there, they stayed and whenever the studio moved to a new country or a new continent, the skulls reappeared in their traditional place.

The summer of 1903 was hot and dry. Father, who had to flee Paris more and more frequently to be able to work in peace, spent a month in Brittany and when he returned to his studio at the end of August, he found the publisher Lévy waiting for him with a tactful reminder of his obligations, resulting from a contract signed two years before. The successful *Documents Décoratifs* was to be followed by a further volume, called *Figures Décoratives*, and

publication could not be delayed any longer. Champenois was also pressing a number of orders and Fouquet wanted more designs for jewellery. On easels turned to the wall, or covered with a sheet, stood oil paintings waiting in vain to be finished: 'Quo Vadis', 'The Deadly Sins', 'Merlin'. It was clear that so long as Champenois and Lévy had precedence they would continue to wait. Something had to be done.

For a while it looked as if there might be a loophole. The prior of a Paris monastery offered Father the decorating with murals and stained glass windows of the new convent that was to be built in Jerusalem. This was the type of work that appealed to him most and it gave him a valid excuse for staying at least a year away from Paris. But first the prior died and shortly afterwards followed the separation of Church and State. The journey to Jerusalem fell through. 'You'll ruin yourself if you don't go away,' insisted Baroness Rothschild, a new acquaintance of his whom he started visiting regularly every week in the rue Berryer. Since the death of her husband, Solomon de Rothschild, she devoted herself to singing and art and indulged her frustrated maternal impulses in helping Mucha to overcome his dilemma. As the main problem was his financial dependence on Champenois, she argued that he would do better to paint portraits and proceeded to prove it, ordering one of herself and another one of the entire Rothschild family. 'An artist like you would make a fortune in America,' she repeated.

Father's imagination was sensitive to such remarks. During his visit to Prague he had come to the conclusion that Czech art needed him and he was increasingly distressed that he had no means of his own which would enable him to give himself entirely to disinterested work

for his nation. After scorning money for so long, he was now impatient to acquire it by any means. Sarah Bernhardt kept making millions on her American tours. Baroness Rothschild spoke of the Vanderbilts, Morgans and Schwabs. Maybe a few portraits would really be enough to surmount the crisis.

Besides, he was troubled by yet another matter.

I was now forty-three, and single. All my friends were busy matchmaking for me, suggesting that I should get married to this or that young lady, and I had quite a difficult time defending my freedom. I decided once and for all that if I was going to marry, she would have to be a Czech. I had seen from Brožík's marriage that it wouldn't work otherwise. There was even a woman who came specially to Paris to marry me—her name was Růžena Jesenská. She arrived, introduced herself as a Czech writer, and I knew immediately what she was after. Actually it was Hladík who had sent her, as he had done previously with two others. But I was very careful. I was determined not to marry, or, if I did, then she would have to have all sorts of qualities—no, it was no use at all. Růžena Jesenská just about managed to get in through one door and out through another.

While he was thus negotiating these hazards, the twenty-one-year-old Maruška Chytilová wrote from Montmorency where she was on holiday with her distant relatives, the Marcuses, a letter to her uncle, a prominent art historian at Prague University.

1 September 1903
Dear Uncle . . .

Here I am in France, but I can see Paris only from a distance, from the edge of the wood. It is a beautiful sight, like a dream painted on the horizon with the distant dome of the Invalides glistening gold in the sunshine. How I would love to paint in Paris. Do you think it would be worth my while for the short time I am still to be here? Perhaps Mucha would give me lessons. Since you know him, do you think you could write him

a letter before I get to Paris on September 20th—telling him what I might come to ask him for? . . . He might at least give me some advice where I could go and take lessons.

When the Marcus family returned from Montmorency to Paris, Maruška discovered that she was expected to earn her keep. She had to take the children to school three times a day, go for walks with them, act as a companion to the eldest daughter Suzanne and although she had registered at the Académie Julian, there was no hope of doing any painting whatsoever. She had finally decided to give up and return to Bohemia when the long-awaited letter from her uncle arrived. It contained a few words of encouragement and a visiting card addressed to Mucha. She put it in an envelope, added a respectful inquiry if and when she could come, sent the lot off to the rue du Val de Grâce and waited. The answer came immediately.

Dear Miss Chytilová,

I await you with great pleasure tomorrow, Saturday afternoon, and will be very happy if I can be in any way of use to you. Perhaps it would be even better if you came today. I will be at home from midday until seven o'clock. I am sending this letter by pneumatic post so as to reach you soon. With very best wishes, Miss Chytilová,

Yours sincerely,
Mucha.

It was a windy October afternoon [she wrote later] when I arrived with my heart racing, at No. 6, rue du Val de Grâce. How would the famous Mucha receive me, what was I to tell him? For several weeks now I had been registered at the Académie Julian, in the ladies' class for drawing and composition, but I was aware that two years at the School of Applied Arts in Prague and private lessons with Professor Terš at Chrudim was not enough. I was the youngest among the students and when Jean-Paul Laurens said to me: 'Mademoiselle,

LORENZACCIO
PIÈCE EN V ACTES
D'ALFRED DE MUSSET
ADAPTATION DE M. ARMAND D'ARTOIS
ANNO DOMINI MDCCCXCVI
SARAH BERNHARDT
Mucha
THEATRE DE LA RENAISSANCE
IMP. F. CHAMPENOIS, PARIS.

Leslie Carter as Dubarry, 1906

bring me next time a drawing from a Greek plaster,' my heart sank. Once again I remembered what Otakar Theer, the poet, had said to me when I left: 'If you need anything, go to Mucha. He was a refuge for all of us, he's sure to receive you.' Mucha, the dream of every girl student at the School of Applied Arts, who copied his 'Four Seasons' from postcards, the perfect draughtsman whom we admired at all the exhibitions—how ever could I dare?

This rather glamorous account, written for a newspaper many years later, departs slightly from the facts contained in her previously quoted letter: 'Uncle Karel had given me in Prague a letter of recommendation to Mucha—I had altogether forgotten it somewhere at the bottom of my suitcase—but now, in my desperate indecision whether to stay on in Paris or not—I fished it out and sent it off with a few words.' What followed was received by Madame Marcus, Maruška's hostess, with mixed feelings:

'Quel bonheur, mademoiselle!' she exclaimed when I showed her Mucha's reply. 'But I cannot allow you to go to the Quartier Latin! Quelle idée! You don't know all the terrible things that happen there!' After a long argument and only when I promised that I would make both journeys in a carriage, she sent the maid for a cab and I was allowed to go. And there I was standing in front of the big, grey house, hearing the bell ring inside, entering the dark portico and catching sight of the severe concierge, Mme Boussard, at the little window: 'M. Mucha?—Through the court to the right.' The small garden was full of the golden autumn sun and the gravel crunched under my feet. I was scared. I went up the narrow wooden steps to the first floor and stopped at the door.

A letter written in 1905, contains some more details: 'The virginia creeper in the garden had turned red and was damp with rain. I had on my blue dress and a hat with a small feather.'

I found myself in a large studio [she continued in her article]. The sunlight was streaming through the top window, and through the tall one at the side the bluish and pink reflection of the Paris roofs. The place was full of beautiful things—statues, Japanese and Chinese fabrics, vases and flowers, unfinished canvases—one of them Sarah Bernhardt as 'La Sorcière'—and the air smelled of incense and orchids. Mucha led me to an Empire armchair and started questioning me about Bohemia and Prague. ['I see you so clearly and vividly,' wrote Father in a letter the following spring, 'in your blue coat and skirt with the golden buttons on the shoulders, your blue-green hat and the tulle tied round your neck. I took off your coat, you took off your hat and there you were in that white blouse and with the golden teardrops of your necklace.']. He was interested in everything, in our young people and their aims and he was very well informed too, reading regularly periodicals from Prague and receiving all the students who came to Paris and brought him news of the political and artistic trends. We were all at the time under the spell of *Zarathustra*, but Mucha did not like Nietzsche.

Then she told him about the opera and how she had observed him as he sat in the box with Rodin.

'There—I knew I must have seen you somewhere,' he cried. 'Like in a dream. I remember your profile.' Then he mused for a while and I was thinking of myself sitting huddled up in my seat, stealing glances at the two great artists and not even daring to think that either of them might look at a young girl with her heart so full of burning love of art. Rodin, Mucha, they were Paris for me, *Cyrano*, *Louise*, Molière, Musset and Verlaine—everything my soul had fed on during the years of studying literature. Suddenly all this was here, round me, within reach of my hand. I had come to Paris as a reward for my results in French and German exams, I wanted to learn, to go to the Louvre, the theatres, Notre-Dame, to see everything, and yet so far I had done nothing, my outings were limited to taking the children to school and the Sunday family excursions. Alone I was never allowed to go anywhere. The Marcuses lived at the rue Poissonière, a few minutes from the Académie Julian in the

Passage Panorama, but even there I had to be accompanied by the maid. All girls in good French families grew up under such constraint and they could only look forward to doing as they liked once they were married. But what about me? What about me? This was not how I had imagined things.

Mucha listened to my complaints and promised to help. 'First, bring me some of your work and then we'll see what next. Come again on Monday.' I went away full of hope that my prison would open up and for the first time I disobeyed the strict instructions and walked. I had promised that I would take a cab and drive as fast as possible through the streets where students walk with their 'midinettes', where the artists and models sit in cafés, away from the infamous Bal Bullier and the whole Quartier Latin where a girl evidently cannot set foot without losing her virginity. And there I was, walking freely along the pavement to the tall gates of the Luxembourg Gardens where the children chase each other round the ponds, nannies knit, throwing an occasional glance at their charges, where the sand on the paths is red in the setting sun, the stone Faun smiles from its pedestal and golden leaves float down on to the dark water of the Medici Fountain.

Father's version of the same event is more succinct.

She came to see me and I asked her to show me what she could do. She said she had brought some drawings with her. They were quite good—but nothing special. She said she wanted to go to the Académie. To begin with, I said, you'll have to live somewhere else. I found her a pension in the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs and sent her across the street to the Académie Colarossi. That was October 16th and after that we met every Saturday until December. She brought her work and I corrected it; we talked, and once in December I drew her head. You see, she wasn't just somebody picked up in the Quartier Latin.

She told her mother, Emilia, only eleven days later, in a letter dated 27 October:

On Monday I went there again. He told me I should work and stay on in Paris. I was happy. He showed me how to draw, how

to set about my work and explained to me the principles of composition. We forgot about time and I was late for supper which caused some unpleasant remarks . . . Right from the beginning I wanted to write and ask you if I could stay here and devote myself to drawing . . . I don't know what to do . . . I certainly couldn't stay on here . . . and what will the whole family say if I go to live in the Quartier Latin? Even so Mme Marcus is rather surprised that I'm not afraid to go visiting Mucha—'After all, my dear, he's an artist and single.' But I see him only as a good friend from way back and I can rely on him in everything. And he's not exactly young either . . .

To the consternation of the Marcus family she really did move to the Quartier Latin and took a room at the Pension Hubert, 99 rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs.

I'm so happy and content here [she wrote to her mother on 15 November] that I can't imagine how I shall ever say good-bye to Paris . . . Also I have found a good friend . . . Vera Lukianova, a Russian, daughter of a senator . . . she knows lots of people . . . and has a cousin, Monod, who makes jewellery . . . I continue going to Mucha of course; those are always the best moments in the whole week. Next week I'm going with him to the Bernhardt Theatre to see *La Dame aux Camélias*. I'm terribly excited . . . He's good looking, even if he starts to show grey hair, but I won't fall in love with him. I admire him too much. But I should like to stay on at least till the middle of December. Can I? Time flies and I shan't be able to see Paris again in my lifetime anyway . . .

The following two letters were written two days later, on 17 November. The first is from Maruška and begins with a quotation from *Eugene Onegin*:

Why am I writing to you? I don't know. It is as though something has died in my soul. I had erected a pure white altar to you in the innermost part of my being. Angels came there to pray. And you wanted to destroy it. Oh, don't destroy it utterly, don't let the bright memory of you be marred . . . You were the

only person I still believed in—and yesterday . . . So many thoughts go round in my head and they all call out against you . . . . Don't take my last illusions away, tell me . . . that I have only myself to blame for everything . . . that I made you lose your balance . . . I should have gone away. I shouldn't even have come to you yesterday . . . It's as though great dark wings of pain rustled about me, I wanted to run away and I couldn't. Something held me back with enormous strength . . . I hate myself for this first moment of weakness in my life. I have always been proud of my strength against men. You are the first to have bent me but you have not broken me . . . Don't worry that I might not bear meeting you. The last, desperate thought that remains in me—more abhorrent than the despair of unrequited love—is that I am unable to love even you. This you yourself have made impossible. Come and fetch me tomorrow as arranged and we shall be good friends again, won't we? Oh, don't be angry with me, please! Only take care not to wound me again. I could hate you to death—M.

The other letter is from the rue du Val de Grâce:

Our letters nearly crossed. The whole day I have been haunted by the thought that I should write to you, say something, and I have not written—I couldn't bring myself to do so. I am sad—sad to tears. I felt the same as you did when yesterday, leaning against the table before you left, you said: You're like all the others. It was as though someone had stabbed me with a knife . . . Am I really like that? . . . Yes, you are right. You saw me wavering and weak . . . like in a dream. But you did not see what was going on inside me . . . I was afraid and preferred not to speak, I said nothing, I was just afraid . . . afraid for myself, for you, afraid of what might happen, of pain, above all of the pain and suffering that might fall on you. I was afraid for your happiness, for the soft, tender light with which you have shone for me so suddenly—and now I am in tears for it all . . . The whole day, the whole night, and perhaps even longer, you will be weaving these black shrouds of yours for my young and dead happiness. What thoughts—cruel perhaps and undeserved—you must have been thinking about me since yesterday to this

hour! Those fateful thoughts have left a trail that cannot be effaced. It only shone once so briefly—and the dear sun went down again. Oh, how afraid I was to touch you lest I should profane that sacred purity . . . of my quivering heart. And I did desecrate it! . . . You don't know that in all my life I have only once been carried away by such deep feeling. I was sixteen, she was fifteen. We were children. I prayed to her and never dared to touch her for fear I might blunt these feelings of mine. She died. Since then I have been abroad . . . and I have given all my burning love to my country. I love it as a mistress . . . Women, foreign women are torture to me. How I have longed throughout all these years of exile . . . for a Czech girl . . . to whom I could at last say that sacred word—which I have never pronounced in all my life . . . It is not to be. A dark river flows between us; it has flowed all night, all through the day, oh, that I could stop it at least for this one night. I only beg you, do not curse this sacred moment, it is mine and I will not give it up for half my life, for that is its price. All that I disturbed out of its dream in my heart, all that fluttered around me in that moment, all this was unimagined veneration, beautiful and inscrutably powerful. I stood revealed to myself and for a moment I quivered . . . That is why all I could say to you yesterday was 'thank you'. Yes, thank you for that flash of light . . . for that profound silence . . . for that new, unknown and infinitely dear pain . . . My God, what a long letter! . . . Maybe I would tear it up if I were to read it through and had time to write something else . . . Maybe I would write something better, but certainly nothing more truthful. And so I prefer truth . . . Tomorrow evening, at eight o'clock, I'll be outside your house with the carriage. Will you be ready? Good night and sweet dreams!

23

THE twenty-one-year-old Maruška came up to all the stipulations with which Father had stockaded his freedom. She was beautiful, unusually well educated, she painted, had literary gifts, admired him and was Czech. Moreover she came from an old family, composed in equal parts of local gentry and patriotic bourgeois élite. Chrudim, a minor district town in eastern Bohemia, was an old cultural centre. It had excellent schools, an extensive library, a concert hall and a large theatre with a repertoire of European standard which was also regularly visited by the major opera companies. Almost as soon as she could walk, Maruška had had a reserved seat in the box of her Aunt Wilhelmina, Baroness Peyersfeld, and at the age of seven had heard Brahms play and watched Tchaikovsky conduct. She knew Ibsen's plays and especially Wagner's operas, the subject of passionate debates among her uncles, who fumed over the utterances of their notorious cousin Hanslick. He was such a dogged and fear-inspiring critic of modern music that, when the Emperor Francis Joseph asked Anton Bruckner at audience what request he had, the old composer replied: 'Couldn't you do something, Your Majesty, to stop Hanslick being so nasty about Wagner?'

Maruška had drawing lessons during her first year at school from her uncle, Baron Friedberg, a field marshal in the Imperial Army, an ardent patriot—he added to his

surname its Czech translation, Mirohorský—and a very competent painter. He began as a pupil of the greatest Czech artist of the early nineteenth century, Mánes, and despite his military career, never gave up painting; his brilliant military scenes have become in recent years collectors' items. The family circle included some impoverished aunts, refined old ladies who lived by giving private lessons, and Maruška, thanks to their care, wrote at the age of eleven perfect French and German, played the piano and read poetry and prose in three languages. But all these broad accomplishments were not paralleled by the circumstances of her family. Her father, a promising young lawyer, instead of starting on a lucrative career, went at the age of twenty-six to the newly established province of Eastern Rumelia, to organize its legislature for the Bulgarian government—Maruška was born at Plovdiv, or as it was called then, Phillipopoli. When the Serbian-Bulgarian war broke out he was interned for his reports from the front published in the Viennese *Neue Freie Presse*, deported and died of meningitis shortly after his return to Bohemia. His widow was left penniless with three children and was only saved from utter penury by a life insurance policy which her husband had taken out shortly before he died, thanks to the indomitable insistence of an insurance agent.

Maruška, very pretty and proud of her emancipation, was surrounded by admirers from the age of fourteen. Before she was fully grown-up she had been rejecting offers of marriage, gathering in her rococo writing-desk deferential postcards from timid students, and reading in the solitude of the orchard surrounding their manor house, where the whole family lived, Pushkinesque letters from her melancholy admirers. However, by the time she was

eighteen, she was finding Chrudim too petty. The town was becoming more and more isolated from modern life. When she finished at the secondary school there, she managed to get herself invited by her uncle, Karel Chytil, to Prague and studied painting and literature. She was both romantic and realistic; she worshipped art as a connoisseur, but had also her own very ambitious projects. She dreamt of the career of a Vigée-Lebrun, and for this even Prague was not sufficient. Two days after taking her University degree, she left for Paris.

What followed was in a way an anti-climax. Instead of having to fight her own way, an artist, whom she admired, was offering her love and the whole world into the bargain. She knew she could not stay beyond the end of the year. It was more than probable that all would end with her departure. There were the many cryptic allusions to a woman whom Mucha was said to be living with. But her proud self-assurance was gone.

The day after they exchanged those two troubled letters, they went to see *La Dame aux Camélias* and made it up. 'It was beautiful,' Father wrote a year later.

> Especially the intervals filled with long silence. After a while you probably found it boring, you wanted me to talk, to say something, but I preferred silence, there were too many thoughts going round in my head to make banal remarks, and it would have hurt me to begin on any ordinary subject. So I kept quiet and you probably thought what an oaf, he doesn't even know how to amuse a lady.

After that they saw each other every day until she left. He corrected her designs for the Académie or gave her homework—charcoal drawing from a model, or plant studies. 'I don't want to prescribe what you should do,' he wrote in a letter after her departure, 'but I give you

some advice: draw. At least an hour a day. Work is to life like a rudder to a ship. Without work and without a rudder, both life and ship go astray.' He visualized for them a most attractive future: 'Side by side from morning to evening at our easels.' Although she accepted everything he said unconditionally, such a prospect did not exactly correspond to her idea of happiness. True, he did talk of marriage, but exclusively in connection with nightmares:

> The whole night through I had the most horrid dreams. I don't know exactly what it was—some party or perhaps a soirée at an art school. The place was full of painters of both sexes, all chatting away, and there was one very big American woman talking to Americans. She evidently was my fiancée, and this made me feel absolutely awful and I kept asking myself how could I have done this, what made me lose my head and so I went and sat in a corner, pondering over this calamity . . .

Barely a month elapsed since that fateful 16 November, a month of great happiness and great doubts, and Maruška returned to Bohemia. From Paris there began to arrive letters many pages long. Maruška replied regularly and the little town of Chrudim, duly informed by the postmaster, started gossiping about young Miss Chytilová and the famous painter who was old enough to be her father. Naturally, there were also the kindly hints: 'To deceive me like that,' wrote Maruška with somewhat uncertain humour. 'Swearing you love me while you have another girl in your heart and even planning to go to India with her. And who is the lady with Indian ideas? Why, Miss Růžena Jesenská, she is going to India. How come? Oh, they are getting married. Who? Didn't you know? She and Mucha.' In another letter she only remarked hopefully: 'They say you have sown your wild oats.'

His letters are full of passionate assurance. 'This is love

such as I had never imagined. I did not have time for such things. Everybody knows my answer when asked "Why don't you get married?" "I haven't got the time." Well, now I shall have the time!' Other letters, however, complaining about the amount of work, do not bear this out. 'I must finish my panneau "Petronius and Eunice" by the end of the week. I have to send it to the exhibition at Vienna . . . I don't reproach myself for not sending anything to Prague . . . I'm thinking of something better for us.' Some days later:

> I have received an invitation from Prague, from Kotěra, to exhibit with the Czechs at the St Louis fair—but they want the picture in Prague by February 1st, which is, with the best will in the world, quite impossible. I don't know how they do things at home, but they've never yet announced an exhibition sufficiently far ahead. For Vienna the request came two months beforehand, the same thing for Düsseldorf, and each time no jury. In Prague they don't even send you the invitation in time.

He spent also much of his time on social obligations, theatre and music.

> Yesterday evening [he wrote on 27 January] I went to the Théâtre Gymnase to see *Le Retour de Jerusalem*, an anti-semitic play. Today I am going to *Absent* at the Odéon. Tomorrow I have a dinner where I shall be hearing music composed to my 'Lord's Prayer', on Friday I have *La Reine Fiametta* at the Opéra Comique and on Sunday afternoon Berlioz's *Requiem*.

In another undated letter: 'This evening dinner with a publisher, tomorrow *Thais* at the Opéra where I shall be sharing a box with friends of the Rothschilds.' And another: 'Just back from the Théâtre de la Renaissance where I saw *L'Adversaire* by Capucine and Em. Arène, the 106th performance. The plot's always the same, marital infidelity, sad characters in sad relationships.' On

20 February 1904: 'I've just come back from a concert given by Miss Správková and Oumiroff and the young Polish violinist, Hubermann. It was arranged by Mrs Palmer at the Ritz Hotel.'

The whole time, however, not a word about what he was plotting with Madame Rothschild. His letters disclose only that he was in a hurry to finish all that he had undertaken. 'The whole day I have been working at my decorative work [*Figures Décoratives*] and I have prepared a sketch for the *Passion*.* Tomorrow I shall be putting in the figure of Christ—the ornamentation is all finished—and the thing will be done.' In another undated letter: 'What a rush! The place is full of people right from early morning. They work in the studio, they work in my room (the lithographers) and they work in the bathroom (the lithographers) on various urgent things.' The next day: 'The whole morning the kaffirs have been bothering me—"kaffirs" I call all those publishers who would stifle me with their orders. I have to use all my energy to protect myself against them.' Later: 'You've no idea how often I'm crushed almost to blood by the cogwheels of this life, by this torrent which has got hold of me, robbing me of my time and forcing me to do things that are so alien to those I dream about.' One day he admitted: 'Powerless I saw time going by, but now I shall never allow it again to go empty handed. Whatever I do which is not for my nation, I do not consider as work . . . And yet I think that everything I create can only be Czech . . . and that perhaps I am helping to assert the Czech attitude towards Nature . . . I don't know, I cannot and will not decide.'

Maruška replied: 'My judgement is poor and immature.

* The poster for *Passion* by Edmond Haroucourt.

But I feel that you belong to us in every line, more than many who live in Bohemia. Hynais, Brožík—are they Czech? And the moderns? . . . They all draw on German examples, whether landscape painters or figuralists; there's nothing Czech about them . . . You're unjust if you consider all your work fruitless.

> How much I thank you [he wrote back]. But don't rely on your presumption, please. Try and listen if my works have really struck a chord in the hearts of our people . . . Put your ear to their bosom and listen, whether my name makes their Slav hearts move or stand still with indifference. I attach great importance to this, for I myself cannot know, I am afraid to judge, I am even afraid of your own judgement. I would rather have the judgement of my enemies . . . from their mouths I can best learn what my mistakes are and what is my value.

> Do you want to know quite frankly [Maruška answered] whether your work has done us some good? Let me tell you it has. You write about 'the people'. Darling, 'the people' is either too broad or too narrow a conception. I know that your name is even on the lips of children. All utter it with gratitude and admiration . . . What have you given to our art? Many plagiaries, it is true, but you have taught many to see Nature and not merely to copy her, to think and compose and seek always what is new in her infinite forms.

Right to the end of his life he was secretly tortured by these doubts which drove him to obstinacy. He felt that the results of his total engagement did not come up to expectations, that something was wrong somewhere, but just as the devout Christian ascribes the rebellion of repressed nature to the devil, he mistook all the warning voices he heard in himself for signs of weakness against which he was obliged to struggle. His later years presented conclusive proof of this carefully concealed crisis in his 'automatic writing'. He was notoriously modest and utterly

free of any conceit. Yet, his friends from beyond the grave kept assuring him of his artistic greatness, praising his work and confirming with almost servile obsequiousness his ideas. How loud must his doubts have been if such strong words were needed to drown them!

At the turn of the century his uncompromising attitude on the question of national art was quite understandable. Czech painting was threatened with danger from more than one side: as everywhere else, some painters were progressive, some academic, and the two groups were at loggerheads. The progressive naturally looked for allies where they were closest at hand—in the Viennese Secession or German Jugendstil—and the academics made common cause with those in Vienna. As a result their work was infiltrated by foreign elements which exasperated Father not only because they were alien, but mainly because they were German, and he could not understand how anybody could cast off his national identity with such utter blindness to facts. This is also why he rejected with such indignation the Secession, even though it was part of the same movement he so warmly supported in France. Viennese Secession was for him the black sheep sneaking into the Czech flock to denationalize it. Landscape painters on the other hand were being influenced by the trends spreading from the German Barbizone, the village of Worpswede, lost in the peat-bogs of the North Sea coast, where Overbeck, Vogler, Modersohn, Mackensen and Hans am Ende had settled in monastic seclusion, producing their mournful landscape impressions, resolving occasionally into fantastic visions of horror. A single glance at a picture by any of them reveals that this is German art. Vogler's blonde maidens, Overbeck's brooding moors, Hans am Ende's pearl-grey birch trees, Modersohn's

hunched cottages and woods 'deriving from the mentality of a stag-beetle living in the rustling leaves' to quote Muther—all such works could only have been painted by an artist native of Germany. The moment anything of it appeared in Czech painting, it struck a falser note than any French influence, however strong.

What, however, was an art nurtured for the most part in the schools of Munich and Vienna and having no inspiration of its own to do? Only genius could hold out against such powerful currents. Some painters, Úprka for example, attempted to express the national character by purely outward means. They painted peasants in costumes, fabricated ethnographical idylls instead of pictures, and in fact followed in the footsteps of Menzl, exchanging Frederick the Great's tabak-collegium for a colourful village wedding. Others adorned ceremonial halls with Wagnerian heroes in Slav reincarnation. It sufficed to dress figures in white gowns or linen tights with moccasins and leather lacing halfway up the calf—the typical garb, as was believed, of the peace-loving Slavs—and the requirements for a national style were duly met. This of course was as false as all their patriotism, which was never able to recognize real national character in the few great artists who were able to express it—Smetana or Dvořák, Aleš or Slavíček. This was the great paradox of Czech nationalism. In its blindness and thinly-veiled chauvinism it branded every demonstration of personality as non-Czech, since from the frog's-eye view of its own puddle such manifestations had certainly very little to do with Czech reality.

And so in the end, Father, who was also classified as a 'non-Czech cosmopolitan', found himself in conflict with everybody. What is more, he was gradually becoming a

victim of the very illusions he was fighting against in others. He was abandoning what was genuinely national in him—Maruška had sensed that correctly—and sidled towards some sort of symbolic realism in which his art survived only with the greatest difficulty.

In 1904, when he finally decided to solve his dilemma, a new element began to weigh in the balance and probably influenced his thinking in a major way. Art Nouveau was showing cracks. A centrifugal force began to operate, propelling one artist after another out of orbit. Art Nouveau was the teething of the new age which with surprising rapidity cut its first wisdom tooth.

In February the daily letters going to Chrudim still told of longing desire, a plethora of duties and daily trifles.

> In the morning came the proofs and a photographer to take pictures of some drawings for my issue of *Paris Illustré* which is under preparation. Now it is two o'clock and the weather outside is mild like spring. The new sun is smiling at me through the open window, the murmur of the town sounds like a faint hum and rustle, sometimes voices can be heard, people talking, the concierge showing somebody the way, from an open window come snatches of strange melodies—someone is playing quite well on the piano, my canary—I've hung his cage near the window—is singing so joyfully that it makes one's heart stand still.

In another letter:

> I do have an inkpot, actually, I have five of them, each more beautiful than the other—I was given them to write—but no, nothing will induce me to fill them with ink, it would be a pity and so I struggle for the last drop of Indian ink, I fish it out of the bottle on my drawing pen and having no blotting paper I dry my thick lettering over a paraffin lamp. You—you wrote, have written, write and will write—it is more or less your element, whereas for me writing has always been about as familiar as threshing oats.

As Maruška was due to go to a dance, he sent her, despite his gnawing jealousy, five pink and purple orchids, a bunch of Parma violets, twelve white and twelve red carnations. In the accompanying letter he mentioned briefly that he was thinking of making a journey abroad. Maruška reacted immediately, even though she did not yet know the whole truth. This she was to learn from his next letter, which must have come like a bomb. 'You ask about my journey. It's like this: I'm supposed to be well known in America, perhaps even more so than in Europe. People have been persuading me to go there, arguing that I might work there on more important things than here. Besides, from various quarters good offers have been made to me. So I've decided to go and have a look.' Further details were to follow:

> Tomorrow I'm going to buy my ticket. The ship I'll be sailing on is called *La Lorraine*, eleven thousand tunes [*sic*], one of the largest French boats. I would have preferred to put off my journey for a week because I have so much to finish, but it can't be done. They're waiting for me on the other side, the newspapers have already mentioned the ship I'm sailing on, so that I would only start with something like a disappointment if I didn't go now. My publishers here know nothing, I'll be telling them tomorrow, I expect they won't be too pleased. But I've still got to complete the things I've started on, so I shall be at it day and night. I can take a rest on the boat. I hear the clock striking two after midnight, I've been working all this time even though it is Sunday. Tomorrow I'll be dealing with various essential matters and packing.

Maruška had no choice but to accept the situation. 'Let me know at least where to write you in New York.' Father probably did not keep things secret so much on her account as out of fear of his publishers who might have taken some radical action to stop him going. Once his

mind was made up he usually acted on the spur of the moment. Up to 1900, he had been a heavy smoker. He would even refuse invitations for dinner parties because he could not smoke at table. One day he realized that his habit was in fact slavery and without giving it another thought threw cigarettes, cigars, pipes and all his smoking gear into the fire and never touched them again. Naturally, breaking the habit so abruptly made him ill and the doctor prescribed him a daily bottle of champagne to offset the damage.

Now, too, having made up his mind, he put his decision immediately into effect.

> I am sleeping my last night here [he wrote on 25 February 1904]. It's past two o'clock. I've been working until now, while Louise has been packing. There was a tremendous lot of stuff, for painting and drawing, suits, underwear, hats, etc.—it filled four trunks big and small, and we packed it all in one evening. I also did the drawings I had promised Champenois and which he was so worried about . . . Tomorrow I shall have people visiting me non-stop until I leave. By eleven I will have to make a stop though. The train goes only at half past one, but all that luggage! I prefer to get to the station a bit sooner, anyway there will be some more friends waiting for me. I've already got my first commission for New York, a portrait arranged through Madame Rothschild. I went to see her in the evening the day before yesterday . . . she sent me two baskets of provisions for the journey: champagne, grapes, chocolate and remedies against sea sickness. Also some useful letters of introduction, including one to the Vanderbilts and Goulds. So immediately I have access into the highest American society. But better not count the chickens before they are hatched.

24

THE departure for America was to be an escape from everything that had made Father famous in Paris and the beginning of a new era. He was not going there to win fame but to earn money, so that he could devote himself to work which, as he believed, was essential. With a reputation preceding him and with millionaires' addresses in his pocket, he set out optimistic as ever for the New World.

Two friends accompanied me as far as Le Havre: a Dutch painter, named Jean van Beers, and Count Basonpier, also a Dutchman. We were in excellent spirits. At Le Havre we loaded the luggage on to the boat and van Beers took his leave. Basonpier, who had just started to tell me a very amusing anecdote, remained in my cabin helping me to arrange my suitcase. As usual in the last few minutes before a ship is due to leave, the entire vessel was swarming with passengers and their friends. The ship's bell sounded, but Basonpier continued with his story. The bell sounded a second time, but Basonpier merely waved his hand. 'That's nothing, I must finish the story.' The first gangway was being rolled away, the men were running to the second one and stewards were shouting the last call for all visitors to leave. 'We're off,' I said, 'they're taking up the last gangway.' 'Never mind, I must finish the story. I'll go with you and come back on the same ship.' And so he did, but if anybody laughed at his story, it was not me, for I had to hear it many times over during the voyage.

From the very outset, the journey seemed to fulfil his

expectations. Whilst still on board *La Lorraine*, he enlarged his millionaire contacts by a Texas oil king, named Peeters, and on 8 March, three days after his arrival, he was visiting the Vanderbilts.

The gilded age of American society was in full swing. On top of the pyramid of golden bricks the Morgans, Vanderbilts, Belmonts and Rockefellers were still busy amassing millions and competing in regal splendour in the accumulation of artistic treasures and in the spending of fantastic sums on charity. It was the pomp of parvenus —the pomp of Renaissance princes buying the works of Botticelli, Bellini or Leonardo with money from shady banking operations and downright plunder. The social code was as strict as the ceremonial at the Spanish court under Philip II. To obtain access among the four hundred was more difficult than to be knighted in the Middle Ages. The contradiction between assumed puritanism and moral ruthlessness was worse than in the Vatican of the Borgias. Without all this, however, there would have been no New York—as fascinating in its irrational opulence as Florence or Rome.

Manhattan was acquiring its typical skyline, resembling at night a ruined medieval castle inhabited by legions of will-o'-the-wisps. Twenty years had passed since the construction of the first eleven-storey skyscraper in 1884, and each new building was struggling a few storeys nearer the sun. Elevated trains thundered along the streets, from the Hudson came the eerie hooting of ocean liners, fire engines rushed up and down town with clanging bells, and the principal means of transport was still the carriage, disdainful of the unseemly automobiles forcing their way doggedly through the traffic jams of Broadway.

Art was proliferating like an over-fertilized flowerbed.

Lots of weeds, lots of leaves, and some giant flowers. Painting had no chance. Competition from Europe was too high and the taste of buyers too low. At an auction where Bouguereau fetched $10,000 and Alma Tadéma $25,000, a painting by Albert Ryder, one of the important Art Nouveau artists, was sold for $250. Architecture, which could not be imported, assumed, at the millionaires' expense, the leading role in modern art. The fashionable Stanford White, the pioneers Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, given the opportunity to realize their ideas on a grand scale, were ahead of their European colleagues and influenced architecture throughout the world. Like Horta and Guimard, they were not concerned merely about style. Wright worked with a whole philosophical concept, demanding on one hand an architecture derived from the natural requirements of life, but also that man's life should be in accordance with his natural needs.

Art Nouveau was by now firmly rooted in America but was largely derivative, in spite of the fact that Whistler's 'Peacock Room', created in 1876, contained most elements of the new style at a time when France was still being swamped by pseudo-classicism. Also in 1876 Tiffany and John la Fargue had begun work on their first stained glass windows which were to impress the European artists so deeply. In spite, however, of many typically Art Nouveau characteristics, their decorative elements were mainly drawn from past styles and, in the case of Tiffany, led to his neo-Byzantinism, with more and more abstract colour schemes instead of conscientious simplification and stylization of natural forms.

While Whistler and Tiffany influenced European artists, the impulses for the new style came to America from abroad. From England and William Morris through

Walter Crane, from France through Grasset who designed the cover for the Thanksgiving Day issue of Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper* as early as 1882, the year of Oscar Wilde's lectures in the United States on the practical application of aesthetic theories.

In 1890 the first poster exhibition was held at the Grolier Club. Six years later there were over 6000 poster collectors in the United States. Before opening his 'Maison d'Art Nouveau' in Paris, Bing went to the Chicago International Exhibition and as a result presented not only Tiffany but also Pennfield and Bradley to his first Paris public.

Before Mucha's arrival there had not only been a continuous increase in the flow of Art Nouveau from France but also a considerable growth in American work. The periodical *The Chap Book*, whose articles and illustrations were exclusively in the new style, had been appearing since 1894. This was soon followed by *The Bibelot* and *The Philistine* which in addition to Pennfield and Bradley had covers and illustrations done by William W. Denslow, Charles Dana Gibson, Ethel Reed and Frank Hazenplug, all developing a specific American Art Nouveau.

The Press announced Mucha's arrival in bold headlines. Both for artists and the general public he was one of the high priests of the Modern style, Sarah's triumphant tours had added glamour to his posters, and most of the younger painters had either been his pupils at one time or another in Paris or had been at least thoroughly influenced by him. The interest was, however, not one-sided. Even before meeting Whistler, Mucha had followed the American 'new wave' and all manifestations of the modern way of life, convinced that it could be sooner accomplished in the United States than in the tradition-

bound atmosphere of Europe where money was short. The Americans who had regularly taken their meals at Madame Charlotte's gave him glowing accounts of the Chicago exhibition, and especially of Tiffany, whose neo-Byzantine chapel aroused his vivid interest, since he considered the Byzantine style as his true and legitimate element. There can be no doubt that Tiffany's example strengthened this trend in him besides influencing him directly when he designed the stained glass panels for Fouquet's shop: instead of following his usual practice—painting on glass—he used the American mosaic system allowing the principal design to dissolve in an abstract colour scheme. There were indirect influences too. When Tiffany set out to produce the ten stained glass windows for Bing's exhibition, he ordered designs from Grasset, Toulouse-Lautrec, Ibela, Ranson, Roussel, Sérusier, Valoton, Vuillard and Brangwyn—in other words, mainly from those painters who were most familiar to Father. Mucha did not, therefore, have to wait till he saw the windows at Bing's to incorporate some of the new elements in his Sarah Bernhardt posters.

Later of course—about a year before the World Exhibition—he was in personal contact with Tiffany and, soon after he arrived in New York, Tiffany invited him to see his workshops and visit Laurelton Hall, the new house that he had designed and decorated for himself at Oyster Bay, Long Island. Father must have felt thoroughly at home in this fantastic mixture of oriental splendour and Art Nouveau, and it is a real pity that in the passionate ten-page letters which he wrote daily to Maruška he devoted to this event only a few enigmatic lines: 'Today I went to Tiffany's. He invited me to look at his premises . . . They have been working for many years from my

designs. Tomorrow afternoon I am going there again.' It is quite possible that in the phrase 'from my designs' he had in mind the *Documents Décoratifs* which was used as a source by artists all over the world. Sometimes he would even use the term 'my style' for Art Nouveau in general. There is only one object known up to date that bears out his claim: a large butterfly with a Mucha female body and Tiffany wings which was discovered by Mr Robert Koch.

Whether any more will ever be found is doubtful. Even though Tiffany did not blow his glass himself, he made most of the final designs and personally supervised the whole process, so that all traces of foreign elements were obliterated. He even claimed the various systems of producing what he called 'Favrile Glass' to be his own particular method, although they had already been used in the 'sixties by Bohemian glassmakers such as Pantůček at Zlatno, Weisskopf at Jablonec, Loetz and Baron Spaun at Klostermühle. In fact, even the Harrach and Koštan Glassworks had been producing iridescent glass since the middle of the century, but all of them stepped up their production of what became known as the 'American Glass' when Tiffany made it fashionable. Thus it is even possible that some of the typical Mucha elements, appearing in the Bohemian glass of the period, came to his own country not directly but by way of America.

All these various threads that connected Father with America plus his Paris reputation had sufficiently paved the way to make his arrival in New York a major event. The Sunday edition of the *New York Daily News* came out on 3 April 1904 with both the front and back page dedicated to him under the headline: 'Mucha, the life and work of the greatest decorative artist in the world.' There

were colour reproductions of his panneaux, his portrait and several pages from *Ilsée*, the whole lot against the background of a romantic, star-spangled sky.

> I went for a walk [he wrote to Maruška] and a great surprise awaited me on the first street corner. Among the posters I saw my own life-size portrait—perfectly dreadful, needless to say—in crude colours on a red background, announcing: *The New York Daily News* brings a symbolic composition of A. Mucha in four colours on the front page of its Sunday issue.' There you are! The entire town was flooded with these things and, as I was told, also Philadelphia, Boston and other towns. The *New York Herald* gave me also a whole front page, so did *The Women's Journal* and other papers I have not yet seen but which are being sent to me.

Artistic societies and clubs gave banquets for him, he was made honorary member of numerous associations and invited as guest artist at annual dinners. Wherever he went he had to make speeches, propose toasts, acknowledge the various honours accorded to him. 'It is evidently ordained,' he complains in a letter dated April 1904, 'that I shall never get any sleep here. Again it is half past one . . . I have been at the Pleiad Club. There were some two hundred people present, artists of all kinds; again a lot of introducing, many speeches, and again I had to speak. This time I did it in French.' Next day, in the same letter:

> Four o'clock in the morning. Once again I'm back from one of those exhausting evenings. The local arts and crafts association was celebrating its fortieth anniversary and invited me as their guest of honour . . . At midnight . . . the president came for me, and walking at his side at the head of the procession I had to go several times round the hall and then into the dining-room for the ceremonial supper. Naturally I had to speak, and I used German so that they could all understand.

'You know,' he adds, rather embarrassed, 'that I don't care for all this and that I hate to be extolled above the others, especially . . . when what I am doing is in my eyes, far from what it ought to be.'

That last sentence is the clue to everything that ensued. When a reporter from *The Sun* came to get a six-column interview for the Sunday issue (10 April 1904), which began: 'Nearly every poster room in Greater New York . . . has as its *pièce de résistance* an enormous panel of Medea with the slanting superscription "Mucha" across one corner . . .' Father declared: 'It is four years now since I have done any *affiches* . . . They have had their day . . . for it is a field which has been overworked, and while it served its purpose for a time I do not think of myself as a poster artist.'

In the first place, this was not true. Even though he repeated this assertion in an interview with Hladík, we know from the quoted letters that shortly before leaving Paris he completed *La Passion* for Haraucourt, a poster as large as those he did for Sarah Bernhardt, and that Champenois was pressing him for promised designs which were all either posters or similar works. In the second place, he had come to America as 'the world's greatest decorative artist'. Instead of using this opportunity which would have brought him the large sums of money which he needed for his disinterested labours, he put the cart before the horse and began pig-headedly denying his own past. Baroness Rothschild had recommended him to paint portraits. Alas, not only the Baroness Rothschild. Also the fortune teller he consulted. And probably his friends beyond the grave. Why, he thought, should he lose time on the rubbish which had cost him the best years of his life if he could earn anything up to $5,000 for one portrait and do real

painting, proving that he was not only a draughtsman but also a colourist?

The trouble was that so far he had mainly done pastel portraits which, thanks to his draughtsmanship, he mastered perfectly: in one or two sittings he not only rendered the likeness, but enveloped the figure with the dreamy magic haze that was so typically his. But a pastel does not last. American portraits had to be in oils. Instead of two or three sittings he needed ten, twenty or more; and even then he was not satisfied, and the model would get impatient. He wanted to do something new, 'not just a portrait à la Sargent', as he put it in one of his letters, but he became bogged down in details, grappled with the paint which would go dull on the canvas, reassuring himself that one more sitting would see the work through. In addition, he got enmeshed in nets which in America are made of particularly tough material. Baroness Rothschild had announced his arrival to the famous socialites, and no sooner had he set foot on dry land than they took possession of him. First he painted Mrs Wissman, a relative of Baroness Rothschild, and the ladies, Mrs Cornelius Vanderbilt, Mrs Morgan, Elsie de Wolf and the beautiful Mrs Mackay would come to his room at Sherwood Studios on 57th Street to drink tea and admire the progress of the work. Mrs George J. Gould invited him for weekends at Lakewood N.Y. where her husband had built himself a palace with an elliptical marble staircase for $25,000 and a palaestra with a hippodrome, rifle-range and Turkish and Russian baths for a further $250,000. The Goulds, however, were not, despite all this, acceptable in society, and were snubbed as parvenus doing unclean business, although old Jay Gould, the founder of the dynasty, had no worse beginnings than the first Astor or Vanderbilt.

In fact his career had a certain romantic beauty: he had tramped the streets of New York, offering manufacturers his invention, a patent mouse-trap which he displayed in a polished mahogany box.

Father's immediate social success was due to the fact that he had for ladies of middle age and beyond, an irresistible charm. He was gallant, always kept a safe distance, and had just that amount of eccentricity which makes an artist interesting without making him unbearable. His conquests spread in wider and wider ripples to Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago and further, thanks to Mrs Potter Palmer, the most celebrated hostess of the Middle West. Widowed in 1902, she lived in an enormous chateau with many towers and turrets, a Louis Quatorze salon, a gallery of French paintings, a Japanese parlour and a music room in Moorish style, organizing endless parties, ridiculed and envied by her equals, but by introducing Father to Mrs Marshall-Field was partly responsible for his subsequent important role at the Chicago Art Institute.

No wonder that the ladies held him in high regard.

> The American woman [he declared in an interview for the *Chicago Examiner*] can always be singled out by her distinction, her grace and ease. She seems never to be embarrassed. She has a keen sense of values in matters of taste, and if sometimes she wears colours and combinations of colour that are not always happy, she carries them with an air that takes captive criticism.
>
> Among the Chicago hostesses [the article continues] Mr Mucha declared Mrs Potter Palmer a pure Anglo-American type, with all the distinction, grace and ease that are characteristic of the race. Mrs Carpenter he selected as the ideal of the svelte American woman, whose predominating characteristic is sweetness and gentleness. Mrs James Ward Thorne he selected as a high type of intellectual American woman and Mrs Charles S. Deneen as combining intellectuality with aggressiveness.

This was not the only occasion on which he spoke about American women. Journalists who knew him as the creator of the Art Nouveau female type were always soliciting his views:

> Today [he writes, at the end of April 1904] the editor of the *World* came to ask me questions about women, about their various types and what they should wear. So I made some suggestions, we talked about dresses and I made a few sketches to show what I meant. The lady was delighted and the next day she came again . . . she wanted me to design several dresses and drape them on some pretty girls whom they would then photograph for the article . . . We went to select the young ladies at the Majestic Theatre and . . . I was much surprised at the 'ton convenable' which prevails at the American stage. Not at all like in Paris. All the ladies are serious young girls from the best families and have access into the highest society, and I do not think they have anything else in mind than their acting. When I asked why they were all looking at me from the stage . . . and from the auditorium, I was told that all the newspapers had reported that I would be coming to that theatre to choose the most beautiful American girl for a picture . . . How do you like that now, they want a 'Mucha-woman' in America! So for a short time I've become a tailor, but I don't mind, it's merely proof that they have confidence in my taste . . . and it will be interesting to work for this burning question of today.

'American Woman Superb Says This French Artist,' declared the headlines over a two-column article in *The World*, dated 8 April: 'She is infinitely superior to the most beautiful woman of Europe,' Mucha told us. 'The anaemic type of Parisian beauty in which all our artists find their ideals is a false one. Here the woman is strong, vigorous—at once svelte and solid.' Naturally he never missed an opportunity of stressing the less worldly side of his personality. Even now, speaking of female beauty, he ended with a prophetic statement which probably

explains his success with the artists and particularly with the new generation of Americans.

> This country is too young yet [he said] to have developed an artistic side. There are painters here, and very good ones too. But they are not American. Although born here, they are European, generally French. They study abroad and are formed there, so that their best efforts are in reality only copies. At the present rate of development, however, the real American painter will be produced within fifty years, and then he will create for himself. He will have originality. He will be American . . . This renaissance will produce ideals of a grandiose severity. Your architecture will be simple. It will have columns built of a single block and vast arcades, it will recall the grandeur of the temple of Solomon and the Egyptian pyramids. Ornate effects, decorated windows, fantastic architecture will have disappeared and a style, vast, large, pure and grandly simple will have taken its place.

25

As Father matured, the mixture of contradictions that formed his character became more pronounced, yet his outward aspect was that of increasing calm and balance. In spite of all his naïve excursions into occultism, in spite of his patriotism which in a world of growing social upheavals was turning into a bucolic anachronism, in spite of constantly misjudging his own abilities, he was becoming a philosopher who, like Tolstoy, sometimes made shattering blunders but essentially knew the truth, even though he did not always want to reconcile himself to it. In this he was a typical Slav: his crisis was not a neurosis, but as Griboyedov calls it, trouble from knowledge. He knew too much but what he knew served him little in his painting. It was no matter of colours, anatomy or perspective. It could only be expressed indirectly, as in the eyes of Rembrandt's portraits. For this, however, he was not old enough. Thus, with excessive self-confidence, which is the mainspring of modesty, and at the mercy of his ideals, he went from mistake to mistake with cheerful optimism, stubborn and inconsistent, ascetic and lighthearted, expecting with childish candour a miracle in a world whose only certainty he knew was death.

> While he moves about the studio to arrange a half-completed portrait [a journalist described him in the New York *Sun*] it is impossible to avoid taking note of his picturesque attire. He was taken unawares by the visitors and had hastily slipped on

some red slippers in place of the loose mules he wore and had thrust his arms into a lounging coat. His painter's blouse was of shiny black satin ornamented with a scroll of golden embroidery at the neck and wrist, and a loose belt of black satin added another odd touch to his attire . . . 'Yes, it is true that I paint portraits,' he continued, 'but I do not care for portrait work as I do for the other. Why? Because it is not so original, so imaginative. One cannot put one's dreams into a portrait.'

'And you dream your pictures?'

'Day and night. That is what makes the artist, is it not?'

On a big easel in the centre of the room stood a full-length portrait of Mrs de R. Wissman seated in a chair, and one imagined the fireplace from the effect of flames on the gown and face. It was an attractive bit of light and shade. To get the proper effect Mr Mucha placed it before the mirror and bade his visitor study the softened reflection.

'It is to be hung over the mantel and the open fire below will seem to have produced the peculiar light,' the artist said . . .

'Yes, it interests me greatly, but,' and he touched a huge book on the table lovingly, 'shall I show you some work that I have put a good deal of my soul and heart into?'

The book in question, *Le Pater*, is a glorified version of the Lord's Prayer . . . The book of decorative panels, *Documents Décoratifs*, show a wider range of work, but was exhibited a little deprecatingly, as if Mr Mucha did not think it worth the attention it has received . . . Many of them have been copied and are familiar to art lovers. One, a figure of a beautiful girl done in soft browns, outstretched on a tiger skin, forces an interrogation.

'You have very beautiful models in Paris?'

'Very, but the most beautiful I have ever had come from America. That is an American model and this, and this,' exhibiting in turn beautiful figures in fascinating poses and tints . . . So many of the decorative panels were done in certain colours that attention was called to the fact.

'Yes,' he said, 'my favourite colours are violet and golden brown. The fashionable shades this spring? You don't say!'

Then, having expressed surprise, you wonder, if it is not

perhaps Mr Mucha's influence that has made these two shades so prominent . . .

'Nature,' says Mr Mucha, 'I am continually studying it, continually. There is not a weed, a flower, a bit of life but is full of suggestion.' He points to the scroll of beetles. 'Look at that—is that not fascinating when you study it as a possibility for designing, the lines and curves and interlacing claws? . . . That is where the eye of the artist comes in—to see in everything some idea for his special use.'

. . . But all of these are, it is evident, play to the Bohemian artist. It is on the pages of his books that he loves best to rest his laurels.

Even though it was logical, after escaping from Paris, that he did not want to go from the frying-pan into the fire, he got entangled in his efforts to promote his 'serious painting' not only in high society but also in circles where there was no prospect whatever of lucrative orders. Soon after his arrival in New York he met some of the old Czech immigrants and through them Father Prout of St John's Church on 72nd Street. He naturally felt extremely at ease among his fellow-countrymen. They were simple, hospitable and understanding people, they helped him to find his bearings in the strange new town, and provided a safe refuge from loneliness. One family especially became almost a second home to him. A painter named Svoboda had a fifty-eight-year-old father, who before coming to New York in 1883, had been a gendarme at Ivančice and knew grandfather Andreas. Apart from this invaluable asset, he had a wife who cooked excellent Czech food, and a daughter who was married to the leader of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, Kovařík, once host and guide to Anton Dvořák during his stay in the United States. Father went there several times a week, happy to be among his own people and meeting there all the visiting

Czech musicians, bearers of fresh news from Bohemia —the violinists Kubelík and Kocián, the singers Emmy Destinn and Mařák, the composer Gustav Mahler, and Rudolf Friml of *Rose Marie* fame. Although Father's weakness for his fellow-countrymen cost him more time than he could afford, it gave him happiness and relaxation. Father Prout, however, the moment he discovered Mucha's sentimental attachment to church, immediately began to exploit his popularity on behalf of the militant Catholic minority. Father had no idea that Catholics were not particularly popular in the United States. Moreover he would have done anything for anyone who told him that the 'Lord's Prayer' was superior to the poster for 'Job'. As a result he let himself be advised by Prout that he should introduce himself by some suitable donation and set to work on a big painting for the Convent of the Sacred Heart. Hardly had he begun when Prout came with yet another proposal—that he should paint the portrait of New York's Archbishop Farley. Again Father agreed, so Prout then asked for a fresco of Prague and a hand-painted banner with the effigy of John Nepomuk for his own church as well. Thanks to these ventures, which naturally brought him no fee, Father had virtually no time for anything else and when he was to show the results of his American trip at the Municipal Art Society's exhibition, he could send in only three portraits, two of which incidentally had also been done as a favour. He returned to Paris with less money than when he left, but bringing with him the unfinished portrait of the Archbishop which he then lugged several times back and forth over the Atlantic, working on it for many years, till it was definitely rolled up and put away among old canvases.

Why the Archbishop never received his portrait is not

quite clear, but it seems probable that Father Prout in his zeal promised a free gift to the Archbishop and a high fee coupled with publicity to Mucha. Some idea of what was in his mind can be gained from an article in the Catholic paper, *The New World*, entitled 'The Greatest Living Artist':

> As a religious painter, Alphonse Maria Mucha has no peer . . . Born in Prague, he was educated for the priesthood and so deeply did he imbibe the spirit of Catholic tradition and of Catholic theology, that they became the determining factors of his artistic career . . . We fervently hope that Mucha can be induced to remain permanently in America . . . Here beyond all question he could found the greatest school of religious art in the world; he would inculcate the grand principles of the Catholic tradition into the minds of thousands of pupils . . . and . . . America, born to civilization through the Church, might be regained to Catholicism by Mucha's artistic revival.

When he was returning to Europe at the end of May, Father summed up his tour on board the SS *Zeeland* in an optimistic letter to Maruška who was awaiting him with mounting impatience at Chrudim:

> It was a good beginning. Now, from Paris . . . I've got to send a lot of things to New York and also material for the autumn press campaign as there are various reviews wanting to publish articles about me . . . Then I must at least start preparing studies for the *Century Magazine* drawings . . . then there's the article on American art . . . which is partly to be published and partly to be used in my lecture in New York . . . and I must prime the portrait of the Archbishop . . . I will no doubt have also to cope with Champenois's dissatisfaction in Paris, but I can't help that . . . and Lévy, the publisher, will be wanting the drawings for the work* which for the time being I have left aside.

In Paris he settled the most pressing matters and

* *Figures Décoratives.*

hastened to Chrudim. The daily exchange of letters had carried his connection with Maruška so far that, in spite of all his horror of matrimonial obligations, he had no alternative but to present himself to her family and thus effect a sort of unofficial engagement.

> At last Mucha announced his arrival [wrote Maruška many years later]. My happiness was complete, but it was soon to be swamped by general consternation. Mucha on his journeys always forgot something somewhere. This time he arrived without his baggage and was most surprised that it had not arrived with him straight from Paris to Chrudim. Usually he travelled with numerous suitcases, like a prima donna, to the utter amazement of the inquisitive and staring crowds. He got out of the train wearing a light suit, blue waistcoat and soft hat, looked around, waited a while, but no luggage appeared. He was very cross with the Austrian railways, insisted that he had arranged everything in Paris properly. After tea Mother ran back to the station and finally discovered after many inquiries that the trunks were sitting waiting at Pardubice, the next big railway junction. At the Paris Gare de l'Est they had evidently never heard of Chrudim and stuck on labels of a station that seemed to be the nearest on the map. Only then did Mucha admit that he had entrusted the dispatching of the luggage to his factotum, Ženíšek, and he had not given a thought to it throughout the journey.

The family visit was short. Embarrassed by the attention of the whole township and continually surrounded by Maruška's relatives, Father returned ten days later to Paris, and although he made no definite statement regarding his intentions, it was taken for granted that Miss Chytilová was from now on his fiancée, particularly since she started wearing a ring in the form of a ruby star edged with diamonds, made from his design by the Prague jeweller Rechner.

As there was no announcement of their engagement, Maruška was still harassed by doubts about the future

which were increased by the malicious gossip of the Chrudim ladies concerning the mysterious visit which had ended so abruptly without any official communiqué.

> You complain that I am keeping our love in the dark [he wrote in an attempt to explain his attitude]. But every explicit and traditional regulation scares me and I see in it only a petrification of what is alive into a dead crystal . . . I fear this process because once this crystallization starts, no power can stop it any more . . . I trust only two things: my work and my love for you. These are my sole certitudes which make all other incertitudes easily bearable.

On 23 September 1904, he wrote:

> I have had a letter from Hladík. He is glad I have found in you what I was looking for. But he says: 'Don't live in Prague, or only as briefly as possible. I know our people. They would be all the time poking their dirty snouts through your fence.' What? He's got no illusions, and he must have a pretty poor fence.

On his return from Bohemia he remained only a few days in Paris and spent the rest of the summer at Jeand-Heures with his friends, the Freund-Deschamps, who converted their orangery into a large studio where he could work undisturbed on the *Figures Décoratives* and on the sketches for the Jerusalem murals, not knowing yet that the order would be cancelled.

But on the journey to Jeand-Heures he had an idea. 'Just think,' he wrote to Maruška from the train. 'I have sketched out a new composition between these two pages. I will call it "Virgo Purissima".' No sooner had he arrived, than he started painting this picture later known as the 'Madonna of the Lilies', and all other commitments were again put aside. He would work on it every day for many hours and only late in the afternoon, when the light was fading, would he do the pages for *Figures Décoratives*.

'No getting away from it,' he complained on 4 September 1904.

> Wherever I go, I'm drawing these endless pages. I've still five more to do, but God, I wish it was over so that I might get on with painting my own things. This may be the end of my contract with Lévy . . . but there still remains Champenois whom I'm gradually getting used to doing without my work and so I hope I'll find a way of freeing myself from him as well.

When he had finished all the pages and brought them back to Paris, he hoped that he could now return soon to America where he was to have a one-man show in the autumn. But Lévy changed his plans completely. He demanded ten more pages for *Figures Décoratives* and waved the exhibition aside, arguing that it should be put off until next spring, by when it could be much better prepared. 'In point of fact I am glad to do so,' Father wrote on 9 September, with his usual optimism. 'If the exhibition is put off, I shall not have to work in such a hurry.'

Now Baroness Rothschild was also back in Paris and Father resumed his regular visits to the rue Berryer.

> Yesterday she sang for me Mendelssohn, Schubert and Mozart, finishing up with a pleasant surprise: four Czech songs with perfect pronunciation. She has a very nice voice, and I congratulated her. She was pleased, and so was Oumiroff who has been teaching her for some time . . . This morning I sent her a large bunch of lilies with my compliments. A propos: Oumiroff congratulated me on my engagement. He had heard about it in America where it was in the newspapers. In Paris everybody knows about it as well. What, then, was the use of all our secrecy?

This, however, led to unexpected complications. Baroness Rothschild, who considered him in every way as her protégé, was horrified. She attempted to persuade him to

give up the idea of marriage, that it was the end of every artist's career and especially dangerous for him, now that he needed complete freedom and no financial worries for his American venture. 'I know she would do anything for me if only I took her advice,' he wrote to Maruška.

> I would have splendid prospects, big money and a comfortable life. But how remote all this is from my way of thinking. Baroness Rothschild is against our marriage because she means well and has a very good heart . . . She does not want it to end in a disaster for either of us. Of course she has no idea what you are like because she doesn't know you and she does not, therefore, mind sacrificing you for my benefit.

In his quandary he turned to that most competent of all authorities—Mme Vitoušek, the fortune-teller—who recommended a guaranteed procedure:

> You know what [he passed on the advice to Maruška], write to her. Tell her I am sorry she does not agree with the step I am taking and that I have told you why . . . It is absolutely alien to me to make concessions when the person asking for them is wealthy—it finally makes even the poorest motive smell of money . . . and this is a matter of the heart which can't have a golden background.

'That letter to Baroness Rothschild makes me shudder,' Maruška replied. 'It is an unpleasant feeling writing to somebody who is prejudiced. I would hate to make it seem as if I was trying to advertise my good qualities. But I will write to her, as I don't want you to lose her friendship on my account.' The advice of Mme Vitoušek brought immediate results. Baroness Rothschild, instead of warming in sympathy to young love, took offence and put Maruška's letter down as an impertinence. When Father tried to visit her, she excused herself on grounds of illness. 'You have nothing to reproach yourself with,' he wrote to

Maruška penitently. 'It is all my fault because I told you to write to her, as Mme Vitoušek advised me. I shouldn't have done it, I know, but no use worrying, it can't be undone. I can only see that the series of my disasters is continuing—when will it stop?'

After the rupture with Baroness Rothschild his luck seemed to desert him. The journey to America was continually being postponed, so that in November, when he was long overdue in New York, he was still in Paris. On 16 November, the anniversary of their fateful afternoon, he wrote to Maruška:

> First thing this morning I put on my blue suit which I wore last year on this day—then I went out and waited for six o'clock. Finally it came. First I walked to the rue d'Assas and along the rue Leverrier to your pension, where I looked at the windows, and then left the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs by the same route as you must have taken last year. I came to the Place de l'Observatoire, crossed it diagonally and there I was in the rue du Val de Grâce. As I was leaving your street I saw in the sky in front of me one great star, Jupiter, and when I arrived in my street the same star was shining again in front of me all on its own, a bit to the left of the three-quarter moon. The air was fresh, almost cold, the autumn mists formed a halo around the street lamps, there was the noise of the trams, the tinkle of the bicycle bells, the sound of people going home from work. A coalman was carrying a sack of coal on his shoulders—it was for me anyway. So I went up the stairs, rang the bell, listened to its sound in the studio and then I went inside where it was warm and the scent of incense was in the air. I put on all the lights.

Another month passed.

> There's nothing new [he wrote in December 1904]. I've still got a lot of work and little rest, but I'm glad to work because I know that I shall be able to leave all the sooner. . . . I'm also learning English and it's going quite fast. I can now speak but only the most essential things, of course. I haven't got enough

time. My teacher sits in the centre of the studio with a book while I paint above her standing on a step-ladder. And so we talk. Now and then I come down, make a note and this is how it goes every day for an hour. . . . Yesterday evening there was a ceremonial banquet of the association called Renaissance du Beau. I had to take the chair and speak. Now I am finishing my mural for Oumiroff—one more figure and it'll be done. Then I must do those Russian covers—they've all three been started . . . for Lévy there are still two pages to be done and a picture I have promised for the Christmas issue of *Le Gaulois*. They want me to write something to go with it, but I don't know if I shall have the time.

He had already booked his passage to the States and hoped that if he finished everything in time he would be able to go for a few days to Bohemia and spend Christmas with Maruška. On 18 December, he wrote:

I had to go to the theatre with some friends, I held out till twelve o'clock, but now I am back with a cold. [The following morning]: With a heavy head I hurried to the studio. There's still so much to do. It's Saturday, my visitors' day, in the evening I shall undoubtedly have to work till midnight, then tomorrow the whole day, but on Monday I shall pack, and on Tuesday—I hope I shall leave.

On Sunday:

When I got back yesterday, I found the studio lit up and about twenty people of all ages and both sexes waiting for me . . . Then Bergès took me off for dinner, then I went to see a painter friend, did his composition all over again for him, and at eleven o'clock I still had to go to the Etoile for an evening of music and singing. So I didn't get home till two o'clock, and you know, with my cold it was like being on roller-skates. Today there've been people here since half past nine, I corrected and drew until twelve o'clock, and then some more journalists came . . .

22 December: 'Now I had expected to be approaching

Bohemia and here I am with pen and paper in bed. We can want—but only want, the higher order alone disposes and acts, perhaps without regard for our will. My ship is due to leave on January 3rd, maybe I shall find another, about the seventh or eighth. I can't go later or I would miss the season.'

24 December: 'It's Christmas Eve, outside everything is white, not with snow, but with silvery mist. Like veils on a Christmas Tree. The mist hangs on the garden and beyond a few trees it is the world's end . . . I'll get up now, dress a little and go to the studio. I'll do a sketch of something Christmasy and in between times I'll play carols.'

26

JANUARY 1905 started badly. Russia, involved since the previous February in a hopeless war with Japan, lost Port Arthur, and on Sunday, 22 January, Tsarist units in Petrograd fired their cannons point-blank into the crowds demonstrating in front of the Winter Palace. The people fled, leaving a thousand dead and two thousand wounded on the pavement. It was a cruel winter everywhere. New York was hit by severe frost and snowstorms, disrupting the traffic for several days, and the social unrest spread from Russia to the East-side slums where people shivered and starved in overcrowded tenements. James Hazen Hyde, a young man-about-town with a French beard and dapper moustache, who had inherited a fortune from his father, president of the Equitable Life Assurance Society, decided to celebrate on 31 January with a fancy-dress ball to overshadow even the famous Bradley Martin ball, held at the Waldorf Astoria in 1897. This notable event had also occurred during a depression when Mrs Bradley Martin, prompted by unselfish philanthropy, conceived the idea of organizing a ball, costing $369,200 to 'contribute towards relieving the misery of the poor by stimulating trade'. Twelve hundred people were invited and the Waldorf Astoria was converted into a Versailles of Louis XV. The guests were required to appear in costumes of the period, but owing to their rather superficial knowledge of history and French court ceremonial they permitted

themselves some minor anachronisms. Mr Bradley Martin arrived, as befitted the host, dressed as Louis XV, but Mrs Martin accompanied him as Mary, Queen of Scots, sporting a heavy ruby necklace that had belonged to Marie Antoinette and a diamond brooch, once the property of Louis XIV. Miss Ann Morgan appeared as Pocahontas with eagle's feathers in her hair, and one of the Belmont brothers even wore medieval armour inlaid with gold worth $10,000. From early morning cartloads of orchids and roses were delivered to the hotel, while detectives searched the cellars for bombs, following a rumour that anarchists had threatened to throw infernal machines into the hall. Newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic reported daily on the progress of the preparations and listed prices of the jewellery and precious stones displayed before the amazed eyes of the world. 'We congratulate the New York society on its triumph,' wrote the *London Chronicle*. 'It has cut out Belshazzar's feast and Wardour Street and Madame Tussaud's and the Bank of England.' As a matter of fact such outrageous blasphemy on the part of the Bradley Martins did not go unscathed. Indignant articles, sermons by clergymen and protests at public meetings led the municipal authorities to double their taxes and eventually forced them to move to England where their daughter Cornelia was married to Lord Craven.

It was this landmark in the history of New York society that James Hazen Hyde decided to eclipse. He hired the famous Stanford White to convert the interior of Sherry's Hotel into the Versailles Hall of Mirrors, engaged Réjane, who came all the way from Paris to perform a one-act play, and entrusted the whole décor of this grandiose spectacle to Father.

'Yesterday I was asked to take on a little job,' he

wrote in January 1905, shortly after arriving in New York.

> One of the millionaires here (there are so many of them) is organizing a ball . . . which is to exceed anything held so far. The whole thing is to be in the style of the 18th century, at the court of Louis XVI. The ball is to be preceded by a vast banquet, then a performance—several opera singers, music . . . He wants me to make a panneau of Réjane for the ballroom . . . and to keep an eye on the décor in general. The adaption is done by America's greatest architect, Stanford White, whom I happen to know from last year. He is building entirely new walls like those at Versailles, everything lavishly done in white lacquer and carved wood, stained glass and so on. In short, it is to be magnificent. The entire high society of America is to be invited, and the one who is giving the ball is called Hyde. So today I have to go to see the architect and then Mr Hyde to talk things over.

The blizzards which welcomed him on the day of his arrival grew worse.

> There are four or five feet of snow in New York . . . As soon as they cut through it, another drift forms. In places I've had to wade almost up to my waist from street to street. There was no alternative, it's the same for everybody. The trams have stopped running, horses have been unharnessed, they only just managed to get them out, and coaches have been left standing under the snow. I'm glad, however, I've seen it. Also have I fitted myself out properly for it: I put on those gaiters I got in Chrudim over my galoshes, and now I feel as if I'm walking in down.

The following days he continued with the same undated letter:

> Everything is ready. Now down to work. I went to see Miss Porel, Réjane's daughter, who is living here temporarily and asked her to send me quickly the costume Réjane will be wearing on the evening . . . Meanwhile I will get the canvas ready, but it will be a great rush, as the picture is 9 feet tall and 4 wide, full of flowers and things.

The drifts are now fifteen feet deep, all traffic stopped and there's not a drop of milk in all New York. All the hotels are full, there are many dead from the snow and frost . . .

It's Thursday, I'm in a hurry, working all day and far into the night . . .

Worked on Réjane's portrait all day. I'm hurrying to get it ready. Tomorrow the whole day, Sunday too. On Monday I move to my new studio, and in the afternoon Réjane is coming for a sitting. It has to be finished and hanging on the wall Tuesday evening. On top of everything the Czech association is giving a ball tomorrow. I can't not go, although it's very awkward . . .

Clearing the snow away has already cost half a million dollars. Is all that water worth it . . . ?

I'm going to that Czech ball, white tie, tails, all dressed up . . . It's quite a long way, I'll get there at ten o'clock if I am lucky, but I won't stay long—I have got work tomorrow. At nine I have to be at the studio. But go I must, they're expecting me and I would offend them if I let them down.

The last entry is for Tuesday, 31 January, the day of the Hazen Hyde ball: 'Caught a cold, must get some medicine.'

The next letter is dated 6 March, a whole four weeks later:

You ask how it went with Réjane's portrait. I finished it in time, but I had to work till the last minute. I also finished the pendant and the illustrated programme for the ball—the programme was carried over on the stone by a lithographer sitting next to me under my supervision. I telephoned to the hotel where the ball was to be held to come and fetch the picture. It was pretty big—a portrait in oils, nine feet high and framed—they had to transport it in a carriage, mainly because it was still wet. I was relieved to see it go, but not for long. They rang up to say I'd forgotten to sign it. So I had to go there and sign and rush back home to have something to eat and get into my costume, because the ball started at ten. My costume was quite simple—the dress of an eighteenth-century judge. Black satin

gown, long white wig, shoes with buckles, lace on the sleeves and at the neck. It was comfortable and not too warm. So off I went. It was at Sherry's Hotel . . . The entire first floor had been completely redone in fantastic luxury, there were gardens, orange groves, and lights among the foliage . . . Everything was in the style of Louis XVI royal court in Paris and also all the costumes were from that period. The decoration was extremely expensive—Hyde a millionaire . . . spared nothing, least of all money. It cost him 200,000 dollars—that's more than a million crowns, all spent on one evening. The guests were . . . in dazzling dresses, mostly authentic and therefore very costly. Mr Hyde was delighted with the portrait and it hangs now in his country house. He's a very active man, quite young, just like a Frenchman and very charming. The evening began with a ballet danced by some ladies from the society in beautiful costumes. Then came the next scene, accompanied by music—a Louis XVI procession, with Madame Réjane carried in a golden sedan chair. Then Réjane performed a one-act play, written for the evening and presented on an improvised stage. Then there was more music and after that, we went for supper into that dining-room with the beautiful orange groves. But here I couldn't hold out any longer—I felt awful, so I went, called a carriage and drove home. There straight to bed, shivering all over. It was my first night in the new studio, the bedroom wasn't ready yet, so I lay on the couch in the studio. I was terribly sleepy, but I smelt gas escaping somewhere, so what with the unaccustomed noise under the window, my fever, and being quite alone on the whole floor, I tried not to fall asleep, fearing that the gas fumes might harm me.

James Hazen Hyde did not get away with his blasphemy either. Public opinion hurled itself upon him with even greater fury than on the Bradley Martins, supported by the board of the Equitable, who considered the whole venture to be bad publicity, especially since it was rumoured that the bills for the ball had been put on the firm's expense account. An inquiry took place and Hazen Hyde had to leave in a hurry for Paris to avoid unpleasant con-

sequences and stayed there almost to the end of his life. A year later, on 25 June 1906, the architect Stanford White was shot dead on the roof of Madison Square Gardens by the Pittsburgh millionaire, Harry K. Thaw, who found him *in flagrante* with his wife, Evelyn Nesbit. All this was a high enough price, but it was alleged that the Hazen Hyde ball cost a further $200,000, paid out to Colonel Mann, the notorious editor of *Town Topics*, for not writing up the scandal. Actually, this was an utterly unfounded exaggeration. Hazen Hyde only arranged a loan for the Colonel with Equitable on his property and Colonel Mann was later able to prove in court that all the hush-money paid out to him by his clients, ranging from the Vanderbilts to the Goulds, did not exceed $184,500.

Colonel Mann (William D'Alton Mann in full) could only exist in a period of unrestricted oligarchy when the eyes of the whole nation were riveted in fascination on the millionaires, building up their fabulous wealth at breath-taking speed, acknowledging no one either above or below them and yet vulnerable to the most primitive of weapons —scandal and calumny. Their Achilles heel was the result of a ridiculously over-emphasized social code. Sensitive to their humble origins, they required more than gold and power to prove their superiority. They were willing to pay anything for proof that their privileged position was not of recent date but the legitimate right of ancient and noble families. A Reverend Doctor Nichols did in fact establish in 1904 that the Morgans were descended from a dynasty of Welsh kings founded in A.D. 605 by Gwynnedd Cymru, and that the Vanderbilts and Astors were equally of royal lineage. But if they wanted to be noble they had first and foremost to apply to themselves the formula 'noblesse oblige' and consider the least in-

Mucha's rue du Val de Grâce studio, 1903

Mucha with Maruška, New York 1908

Mme Mucha in New York, 1909

fringements of the Code inadmissible. They feigned morality and refinement which they did not possess, and put themselves at the mercy of blackmailers to prevent facts being published which in their heart of hearts did not shock them in the least. It was convention for convention's sake carried to absurdity, a game which they all played with such deadly earnest that they finally became its proper victims. Colonel Mann had an easy job. His luxuriously produced magazine sold well to the eager public, so that he had the choice of either enlivening its pages with details of a scandal, adultery or impending bankruptcy, obtained through his spies, or—and this he preferred—not publishing on far more favourable terms. For years he succeeded in evading prosecution for libel by the well-known practice of describing an anonymous scandal and supplying the names in an innocent news item printed directly below it. His days were, however, numbered when in 1906, he published a paragraph about Miss Alice Roosevelt, daughter of the President, alleging that she was a heavy drinker. *Collier's Magazine* seized the opportunity, attacked not Mann himself but Judge Deuel, his secret ally, and the worthy judge fell into the trap. He sued for libel; *Collier's*, carefully primed with all the incriminating material, produced proof and turned the trial into a shattering indictment of the blackmailer who had been terrorizing New York society for years.

Mann's activity was stimulated by the millionaire families willingly displaying the show of their opulence before the public, and the entire Press—not merely *Town Topics*—lived on juicy gossip. Some of the rich like Hazen Hyde actually made a sport of provoking public opinion. Harry Lehr, the stunt man and social aide-de-camp to the celebrated Mrs Stuyvesant Fish, once arranged a delicious

dinner for his friends' dogs, with *pâté de foie gras* and roast chicken; on another occasion he called an ambulance to take a bruised rose off to hospital, and at a formal dinner party he brought a performing monkey to the table, introducing it as the Prince of Corsica. In fact animals enjoyed particular popularity in this organized extravagance. At the dinner party offered by Mr and Mrs W. E. D. Stoked the gentlemen were given as favours small baskets containing bull-frogs that jumped out and hopped around the table. Wecter describes an old lady who used to ride in her carriage with monkeys on either shoulder and a pig at her side, and a guest who entered a ballroom in a small truck pulled by a seal. No less provocative in the eyes of the indignant critics of the oligarchy were the costly dinner-dances held in millionaires' homes where the food alone for one person might cost $100, not yet devalued by two wars, and the cotillion favours consisted of gold and diamond jewellery. When George Gould gave an engagement party for his daughter Marjorie and Anthony J. Drexel, he spent more than $10,000 on gifts for the guests.

And to this New York Father came in search of money for his dreams. No 'subservient' work—only large, expensive portraits, or perhaps murals, preferably with philosophical content to enable him to smuggle the Word of Truth into the temple of the golden calf. Instead he was invited to opulent dinner-dances at the millionaires' homes where he admired their private galleries, made witty conversation and amused the ladies by classifying their types according to the stars and planets. 'You are a lunatic type,' he informed Mamie Stuyvesant Fish in his halting English. They saw him as the famous, wealthy painter who had come to New York for a rest and did not wish to be bothered. The steel king, Charles M. Schwab, who had

built himself a residence in Riverside Drive modelled on the Château de Chenonceaux at a cost of $3 million, asked Father to design him a decorative panel for the entrance hall. This, however, smacked too much of all the drudgery he laboured under in Paris and the offer was turned down. After that, nobody ever dared to approach him with a similar request.

Father lived on East 59th Street, two blocks from Central Park and Fifth Avenue. During the day he painted the Archbishop and the Madonna for the Sacred Heart, eating almonds, raisins and fruit to save time, and in the evening, when not feeding on goose, dumplings and sauerkraut at the Svobodas', he could be found at Delmonico's or Rector's dining happily with people he did not know from Adam. That was one of his biggest troubles —he could not remember names and rarely knew whether he was talking to a millionaire, journalist or insurance agent. The less he could recall who his companion was, the more friendly he became, so as not to give offence. He would secretly admire the *maîtres d'hotel* of famous restaurants who greeted him by name, whereas he had the greatest difficulty at social gatherings in picking out his hostess.

Social life was basically against Father's grain and he avoided it in Paris wherever he could. But in New York he believed it was necessary for the achievement of his plans and so he bore with fortitude even the dinners at Rector's, relieved only by the occasional appearance of 'Diamond Jim' Brady—whom Rector called his ten best customers—who could be observed eating an average dinner of four dozen oysters, a dozen crabs, six or seven large lobsters, a huge steak and a tray of pastry. Father actually preferred going to Bustanoby's because it was called Café des Beaux Arts and had a gipsy playing

Moravian folksongs. This band was the final test for New York's beauties on their road to success. If, when one of them came in, the gipsy met her at the door and led her to the table playing his violin all the way, the young lady knew that from now on New York would be at her feet.

Most of all, naturally, Father enjoyed the company of his artist friends in New York. One of them became his faithful companion for many years—Ernest Peixoto, who started his career as an illustrator in San Francisco, and who could not only draw but also stick his whole fist into his mouth. One day at a party he performed this memorable trick just when a young lady entered the room. Her sudden appearance must have been such a shock that he could not extract his fist and was introduced to her in this very disadvantageous situation. The young lady, however, was so impressed by his achievement that she fell in love with him and subsequently became his wife.

Thanks to his friends Father became a familiar figure at the Village where he could go in the famous Russian shirt he worked in all day, and in the various art-clubs and Grammercy Park mansions discuss and expound enthusiastically in his mixture of French and English until late in the night. 'It's already so late, two o'clock in the morning,' he complained in his letters to Maruška, who as yet had no idea how despite his rush of work he could lose all idea of time given the opportunity of talking about art and the problems of mankind.

It is remarkable how Father, who could not bear pretence or falsehood and proudly displayed his knowledge of physiognomy, was prone to fall for windbags and campaigners of worthless causes and became easy prey to all sorts of schizophrenics and con-men. It was enough to spin him the most inane yarn—a sick wife and five hungry

children would do—or to come up with a plan for a rebirth of the Powers of Good and Father's humanitarian spring was released. Such were, for instance, the propositions made to him by a certain Mrs McKay, evidently a worthy lady, who suggested founding a nationwide organization to be known as the 'Modern Athenian', through which the most distinguished artists would turn the soul of America away from material interests to Beauty and Higher Aims. This was an opportunity Father could not possibly let go by. There followed meetings, planning, launching a magazine, designing a cover and illustrations for it and raising of funds. With the latter Mrs McKay would cope most successfully, as long as she could use Mucha's name. Fortunately, before things got out of hand, a newspaper printed a large photograph of her and a list of false names she used in her operations. 'So we all had a good laugh that things turned out well after all,' he wrote disarmingly to Maruška.

But the time was approaching when he was to need his cheerful trust in an ultimate happy ending more than ever before. In a moment of truth when he realized that his American plans were not developing as he had expected, he wrote:

> With this restless sorrow and continual fear for our country I am straining every nerve to be useful in some way, to help brighten up that ravaged face of my homeland, but this curse of time slipping through my fingers is like premature death . . . God, there's so much I'd like to do, so much I'd like to know and have the power to achieve, and so little time left . . . It's taken me half my life to win even such independence as I have . . .

27

3 March 1905:

The Archbishop is away and will not be back for a fortnight . . . I have worked for three days on his portrait, getting it into the right atmosphere . . . I don't like the hard purple of his big collar, it's crude, I can't even bear to look at it. So I went to his house this morning to see if I could find something better in his wardrobe. And I did! His ceremonial robe with the ermine . . . Now I'll have to repaint the whole thing, except for the face and the hands that will remain as they are . . . In two days it will be done.

17 March 1905:

I'm painting the Madonna and when I do so, everything in me sings, but I'm afraid I shall not be able to paint it as I would like to. I shan't have the time . . . Everybody is expecting the Archbishop to be ready . . . but he won't be coming to pose until 1st April . . . He'll only be sitting for his face and hands for three days at the most.

3 April 1905:

There's always somebody here—the studio's full of ladies who come to look at the Madonna and Archbishop. The two pictures will soon be ready and then I'll start work on two portraits which are more or less commissioned.

5 April 1905:

I must tell you about the first day of my course. The place is called the New York School of Applied Design for Women and it was arranged that I would start on Monday. When I got

there at two o'clock, the place was already full. All the teachers and pupils were there, as well as teachers from other schools and various guests. I began speaking and, before I knew where I was, it was half past four. I was really surprised. I didn't say a fraction of what I wanted to . . . So I'm looking forward to next Monday.

17 April 1905:

Various ladies have been here again, including a cousin of Theodore Roosevelt, Mrs Meritt. I'm going to have dinner at her house; she is witty and must have been a great beauty. She keeps urging me to go to Washington and see Roosevelt.

27 May 1905:

I arrived at Washington yesterday evening at nine o'clock. I got hold of a Negro porter and told him I wanted to go to the Hotel St James which I had found in a catalogue. He took me there, it was right by the station . . . I have a little room looking out onto a courtyard, with a bathroom next door. I couldn't sleep, so I went out . . . The night was wonderful and Washington . . . just like a huge garden. Nothing but parks, lawns and flowerbeds. The trees and shrubs in blossom almost made my head go round . . . In the morning I was awakened by a noise in the courtyard. They were breaking up the ice for the day. It is incredible how much ice they consume here. I got up, it was half past seven, dressed and went out. First I had to buy a pair of gloves, I didn't have any clean ones left, and while I was there, I also bought a walking stick. My old one was a bit worn. I got a simple black one, with a small silver ring—actually three rings, but very small. I thought it would be nicer to hold, but they cut into my hand a bit. Oh well, it doesn't matter. Then I wandered about till ten o'clock, went home, put on my frock-coat and top hat. By then the carriage had arrived and I went to The White House where President Roosevelt lives . . . He knew about me—I don't remember now what he'd seen of mine—and so we talked a lot about American art. . . . After that I went and had something to eat, and then home, and the whole afternoon I wrote my views on American art and what

ought to be done to emancipate it from foreign traditions. I had promised to send it to Roosevelt, so I wrote it straight away and had it delivered.

2 June 1905:

You write, 'Drop everything and come back, or I shall be cross with you.' But, Maruška, how can you say this? You must know that I'm not neglecting you on purpose. I not only want, but *must* settle various matters here, so that we can have some peace in the future. It's our subsistence and there are so many other difficulties I've got to struggle with that often I've lost all hope . . . Besides I have to defend my name. There are many opportunities which I can't even touch because it would mean compromising the goal I have set myself.

16 June 1905:

I've arranged that my school here will be virtually my académie from Paris, transferred to New York for the sake of my American students, that is practically of all my pupils. It will be known as the Cours Mucha and be an independent section of 'The New York School of Applied Art for Women'. It won't be only for women, but for everybody . . . I shall do correcting twice a week . . . in all four classes. The other days will be for my own work. The course will last four months, December, January, February, March. The rest of the year will be mine.

7 July 1905:

After the visit to Roosevelt I promised to come and stay with them at Oyster Bay. They invited me for the 4th July. There were a lot of people in the garden, but indoors only few of the family. We ate a little, but talked a lot. After supper we had a wonderful view of the sunset over the bay—like the Bay of Naples—and all around us were bonfires and fireworks. There was a lot of shooting and banging, and we sat in the park until midnight. There was dancing going on in the hall, but we preferred to stay outside in the wonderful night. I slept at the Meritt's house called ' Elfland', and my room had all over the

walls small bunches of violets—painted of course, or rather painted on wallpaper. The following day at half past ten, I said goodbye, but I had to promise I would come again. So I'm going back one day next week if I can find the time.

19 July 1905:

When I think that I shall have to be back here in three months it hardly seems worth going away. But I can't put off our meeting any more. I've had an idea: I could invite you over with Mother, we could get married here and spend the summer somewhere in the country.

To Maruška's mother, Emilia, dated 14 August 1905, from Paris:

Much revered Madam Chytilová . . . It is true that last year I counted on getting married to dear Maruška immediately after my return. Unfortunately my affairs in America made slow progress. The main reason for this has been the illness which has caused me to lose a whole season . . . Here in Paris I have always been well off, with plenty of work. But it was not my intention to waste all my abilities on what in my opinion are paltry jobs . . . I have cut all my connections here so that nothing should hamper the serious and important work I have to do. America must provide me with the necessary means, and thus . . . as I am led to hope by the artists there and many others . . . I can rest assured that this source of income will be sufficient to enable me to settle everything honourably.

20 August 1905, to Maruška from Paris:

From the very moment . . . when I fell in love with you and when I decided you should be mine . . . from that very moment misfortune started pursuing me and has done ever since . . . I am not in the least ashamed of my present state; you are well aware that if I wanted to do like all the others, I could still be eating from the full fleshpots . . . Under no circumstances am I going to look for new engagements in Paris . . . and even if I wanted to, I couldn't for lack of time . . .

8 September 1905:

I accept your offer. The portrait which I intend delivering by Sunday should see us through somehow for the time being. Send me two thousand and keep the rest for the next time. I'll put the most pressing matters in order.

8 October 1905:

I've asked Dr Tonder to arrange a loan for current expenses, for my journey to America and my stay there until money starts coming in.

15 October 1905:

Dr Tonder has over-estimated himself and I over-estimated his perspicacity and influence. I have wasted a complete month . . . and am exactly where I was . . . only I've got less hope and less time.

Maruška's mother, Emilia, to Father's sister, Anna:

Your advice not to get impatient about the wedding, to wait, comes somewhat late in the day. As you yourself recognize . . . it is essential that nobody should know of the real state of affairs, namely your brother's insolvency . . . What would people say about this continuous procrastination, not to mention our family?

Anna to Maruška:

What sort of life would you two have if the whole world thought you to be wealthy and you had to try and live up to it? . . . He would be forced to take on humiliating work merely to earn. But your mother, even though she knows the difficulties my brother's had over there this year, doesn't even consider whether one can think of marrying under such circumstances. She just carries on preparing your trousseau.

Maruška to Paris:

I've had a letter from Anna. She's worried about you . . . You are to be practical, think and keep proper accounts. Don't

give away your drawings to whoever comes. She's right. You often sacrifice your time, your strength and health. Why? To no purpose . . . I beg you, if somebody orders a portrait or something else, don't let it go cheap. You're charging too little. The upper classes are impressed by high prices. It may seem as though I'm very money-minded, but believe me, I'm right. Here, among us poor Czechs, a beginner appraises his work highly, and you let yours go cheap.

16 November 1905, on board SS *Zeeland*, to Maruška:

The going is pretty sprightly today. The ship is tossing and dancing. Hugh waves are sweeping the decks, all the portholes are tightly closed and the passengers have scattered. The heavy sea comes thudding against the sides, breaking into spray and flying over the ship in continuous showers. At times the vessel rears up like a horse, then bellies down on the water so that everything shakes and thunders . . . It was bad all through the night, with the whistling wind, but I slept well.

22 November 1905:

No sooner had we arrived than a reporter from the *New York Herald* came on board to see me. So there was an article to welcome me! . . . I got up early and unpacked all my drawings and paintings . . . and a framemaker came to mount them on frames. Tomorrow Adler will be here and we shall select what we're going to exhibit. We've agreed, Adler and I, that he'll get twenty-five per cent on everything sold and on every order. I am sure that he will be concerned to earn as much as possible.

23 November:

Adler, who came today . . . is of the opinion that we should put off the exhibition for some weeks when it will be possible to sell more . . . The things I've brought are not sufficiently negotiable in his view . . . he wants decorative panneaux with typical American figures. He understands these things, so I'll do as he wants, he knows his customers.

25 November:

The more I think about it, the more pleased I am that the exhibition has been put off . . . I'll do something really nice . . . that people will like. Adler wouldn't be incurring expenses with the exhibition if he wasn't sure it is worth his while. I wouldn't like you to think I'm writing this merely to please you. I really do think it and above all I have confidence in Adler's greediness.

Maruška to New York, 30 November:

Yesterday the workers held a big open-air meeting with huge banners and slogans. The speakers roused the people to struggle for universal suffrage. They pointed out how the government is wronging us Czechs, a nation economically so strong and yet impoverished for the benefit of others. University students are joining in with the workers and tomorrow they'll be taking part in strikes and a procession . . . The government probably won't make any concessions, but the people are determined to struggle to the end. It's interesting how the small bourgeoisie is scared, hoarding as if there was to be a war . . . We are on the threshold of big changes, the nation is full of enthusiasm and energy, and this time it's the lower classes, the workers, who are demanding the nation's rights.

21 December, to Maruška:

In the evening I'm going to a dinner at the Waldorf Astoria. Sarah has arrived and they're preparing a big welcome for her . . . Tomorrow we'll be lunching together so that we can talk things over.

22 December:

I went along to the Majestic Hotel at twelve o'clock . . . Sarah was still in her bath, so I had a chat with my old friends from Paris. She's got her whole household with her, about six people, secretaries and servants. Finally she arrived. Naturally a warm reception with kisses on both cheeks as usual after such a long absence. Then we got down to talking and food . . . We were

both glad to see each other again and Sarah was pleased to hear that I had got rid of those publishers in Paris; they wore me out and consumed my spirit. Poor thing, she's grown much older since I last saw her, but she was very well made up . . . and she still has the freshness of her spirit, body and voice . . . I stayed with her till three o'clock, then home, and a concert in the evening. Fiedler conducted *Don Juan* by Richard Strauss. I did not like it somehow, it's immature and restless, full of cheap Secessionist effects. But Beethoven's Fifth Symphony gave me some rest again. That's real music . . . On Christmas Eve I'm going to the Svobodas' at Mamaroneck. Kubelík has also invited me for his Christmas party, but I shan't be able to go, I had already promised the Svobodas. From the twenty-eighth to the first or second of January I've been invited to the Goulds at Lakewood, there I will get some real rest, at last!

31 December from Lakewood:

In the evening I'm going to a ball. I had to stay over for it but early the next morning I'm going to New York . . . I'm glad this wretched year is over and a new one starting, though I don't yet know what it will be like, but at least it's a different one and not the old, ugly one we have just been through.

On 2 January 1906, to sister Anna:

I was given a very cordial welcome here. All the newspapers have written something, and artistic societies and private admirers have arranged evenings for me: the Pleyads, where there were about three hundred people present, the Association of American Illustrators—about 200 present—and the Salmagondy Club.

In another letter:

My health is excellent in spite of the continuous excitement. Today, for instance, it's six o'clock on Saturday: at seven I've got to be in evening dress and on my way to dinner, at ten o'clock I have to be at another meeting half an hour from there, and then I have another half hour's journey to the Slav Association where there's a dance.

Only several years later, in a letter on New Year's Day from Lake Forest, did he confess to Maruška how things had really been:

> You've got no idea of the struggle I had, all the hopes raised and dashed again. These were often terrible moments I never told you about, nor of the spiritual torment I went through—when I wondered how it would all end, what would happen . . . Was my life to prove useless and wasted? These moments crushed me dreadfully. But you know I would never idly sit with folded hands. I had orders for magazine illustrations—I even did a cover for *Town Topics*—and there were the fashion plates. One man who publishes fashion designs for tailors came to me with an offer and I made three drawings. The tailors liked them and asked for more. Naturally I didn't tell them I'd done them myself but said they were by my pupils.

His letters in 1906, however, continued to be written in optimistic vein. On 24 January:

> I've received an invitation to go and lecture in Philadelphia. I intend asking 200 dollars . . . I've also been at Tiffany's big workshop . . . they sent an automobile to fetch me, and I was met at the entrance by the manager. There are about a hundred artists working there and many girls. They produce glass objects, mosaics and carpets. They asked me over because we've known each other for a long time, and I stayed there till six o'clock.

2 February:

> Today was the birthday of some woman writer. Her friends were giving a party for her. I was to open the procedure by addressing her and placing a crown of roses and laurels on her head. But I was teaching that evening and so I didn't get there till half past eleven. There were about a hundred people, ladies in full evening dress, all waiting, poor things, for me to arrive. So I did my act and then began handing out the presents and congratulations.

16 February:

A lot of people came to my place at five o'clock, including Mrs Clark, a relative of the Morgan's, or perhaps of Mrs Meritt, I don't know. She wanted me to teach her drawing. I said I didn't have the time at present, unless there were others who wanted to learn as well . . . I went to dinner at Mrs Bunker's, and we went on to the opera. I had the Gould's box for the evening. Once again I heard *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Caruso and Sembrich sang like angels. The music is graceful, though rather shallow, but full of new effects for its period.

28 February:

How are things going with my exhibition? I am to have several at the same time. Next month there'll be one at Philadelphia and one here at the Municipal Gallery. They're putting one whole room at my disposal. Adler also came along today to ask about the future. I told him that I wouldn't be exhibiting with him this year and that I'd rather leave it until I could bring something of importance. The thing is that everybody has been advising me against exhibiting with him because he'd take advantage of me . . . In the autumn I'm to have an exhibition in Chicago and Boston.

3 April:

I went this morning to have a look at the exhibition as they were hanging the pictures. It includes the 'Madonna', 'Quo Vadis', the originals of 'The Lord's Prayer', a number of drawings, portraits, originals from *Documents Décoratifs* and *Figures Décoratives*, in all about eighty works. The opening is to be this afternoon. It goes on till Easter, but I'm not expecting to sell anything there.

25 April:

I've been working the whole day making such small puny drawings. Just imagine—for soap boxes! A Chicago firm intends to launch a Mucha soap and wants me to do four little panneaux with a figure and some flowers. I wouldn't undertake such work

if things were different . . . I've, however, refused illustrating the novel I told you about. It would have taken me too much into trade and low society . . . We're all right for next year: 1200 dollars for the illustrations I'll be doing for the *Century Magazine*, 700 dollars for ten lectures in Chicago, 700 dollars more in Philadelphia, then I'm contracted for 1300 dollars here at the New York school, and there's my own course which will bring in, shall we say, a further 1000 dollars. That's at least what it brought in this year. So altogether we shall have about 5000 dollars.

In another letter from the same month:

I have never been able to imagine myself being attached to somebody for ever without fear and a giddy feeling . . . the very idea always filled me with horror—no, not that, no. Still, I gave little thought to the matter. I had no time to think about matrimony. It was only in dreams, if I had a nightmare, that I saw myself in a wedding procession on my way to church, walking alongside somebody who gave me the creeps, and I would shake all over and fight against this fear until I woke up sweating, but glad that reality was for once better than dreams.

The American, 2 May 1906:

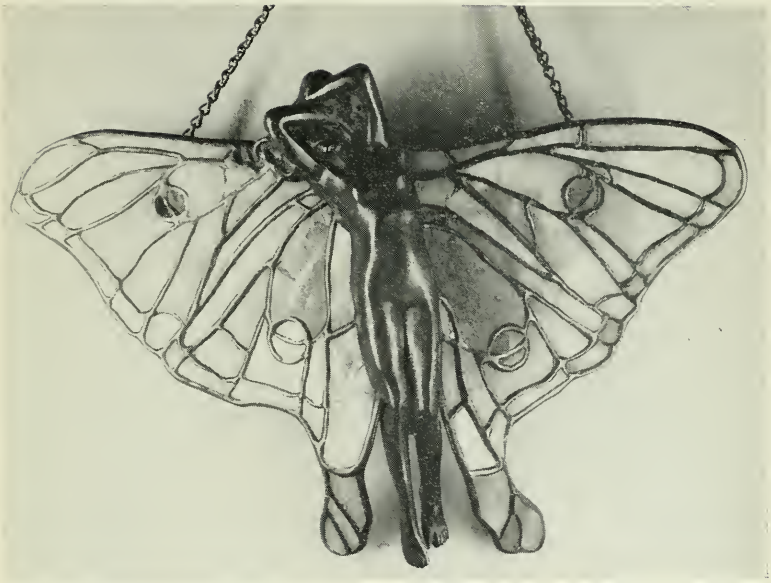
MUCHA THE POSTER PAINTER FINDS IDEAL BEAUTY IN BRIDE-TO-BE

Man over whose Pictures the Women raved will wed in Woods near Prague

Alphonse Mucha, who has so successfully painted the ideal woman, and who seemed to be able to picture her very soul on canvas, announced yesterday at his studio, No. 15 East Fifty-Ninth Street, that he has found the living reality.

'*I saw her and I loved her.*'

'I saw her and she was beautiful, and I talked to her and she was spiritual, and I loved her,' was the way Mucha told of his finding yesterday. Mrs Frederick Richardson, the sculptor, was moulding a relief of the artist which he was to take to his bride, and as he sat thus in the studio, he told her of his coming wedding.



Mucha body, Tiffany wings. New York, c. 1910. This remarkable object is the only known survivor of the co-operation between the two artists

Mucha and family, 1920. The author on the right

Mother and I went to stay with uncle Karel Chytil in Prague, to prepare all that was necessary for the wedding. Naturally my dress was most important to me. I had imagined wearing a dress with a long train and veil. But Mucha pointed out that for a wedding in the morning the bridegroom could not wear tails and that if the bridegroom did not wear tails the bride could not wear a train. In those days the fashion was for dresses to reach right down to the ground, with pretty flounces all round, and a little train for wearing in the street. 'Short' clothes reaching to the ankles were only used for sport. Finally I had a dress made of *crêpe de Chine* with real Brussels lace, a white straw hat to go with it, decorated with Valencian lace and a small feather. Mucha, who insisted that our wedding should be strictly private, decided that it should be on June 10th early in the morning at the St Roche Chapel in the Strahov Monastery, where he slept for the first time as a young boy when he came to Prague to seek admittance into the Academy.

28

After 1906, Father lived in the United States more than in Europe. He gave up his studio in the rue du Val de Grâce, transferred its contents, including the old cook Louise, to New York and settled down to married life. He now had a regular income from lectures at the Chicago Art Institute; he taught at the New York and Philadelphia Art Schools and under Maruška's supervision was no longer so prone to refuse commissions which he thought 'unworthy'. In this point he was utterly unpredictable throughout his life. One day he would find it perfectly acceptable to produce an invitation for a children's party, or a poster for corsets, and the next he would refuse to design a piece of jewellery or tackle a scheme of interior decoration. Now Maruška also convinced him that he should work through an expert art dealer, and in fact it was thanks to Kobler that he received the recognition he cared most for: Kobler exhibited the originals of his 'Lord's Prayer' in New York during Christmas week and *The World* devoted a whole page to the illustrations and to the accompanying text.

His social contacts, even though still unrewarding, extended and consolidated thanks to his young wife. He was a regular guest of the University Club, the Strolers and Pleyades; he and Maruška had the regular use of a box at the Metropolitan Opera; they had their seats at the Carnegie Hall, and after concerts or operatic performances

they would give a supper for the famous visiting artists in the studio which now very much resembled the old one in Paris. For a while it seemed that, if Father had not achieved actual wealth in America, at least he had security with an ever-increasing range of possibilities.

'On Sunday we went to visit the Schwabs,' Maruška wrote to her mother on 13 January 1907.

> He is one of the biggest millionaires here—years ago an ordinary worker in the Californian gold mines. He showed us over his new house. It has a wonderful staircase made of precious marble, and rare furniture in each room, imported from Europe (or copied from old models). He engaged 200 workers from Paris to do the tapestries which adorn his dining-room. Each bedroom has a bathroom with a marble vaulted ceiling, mirrors and a host of showers squirting water in all directions. In the basement of the house there is a large marble swimming pool—much bigger than the one in Mr Kočí's garden at Chrudím—with sparkling clean water . . . He also has a gallery—naturally every rich man has a gallery here even if he doesn't understand a thing about it —with pictures by the most famous artists, often not particularly good ones, but that doesn't matter. The main thing is that it's a Bouguereau. He also has a portrait of some cardinal or other by Titian—about the same size as the one of our great-grandmother—for which he paid 300,000 dollars. Of course it is lovely, but the principal thing is that no one but he could afford it.

Thirty years later, these marble halls, polished staircases and stucco walls were to be demolished like an enormous unwanted toy, to make way for tall, dull blocks of flats. Broken masonry and plaster dust buried all the priceless junk which the steel king, a former stake-driver, had deemed to be a fitting environment for his person and for which he had once paid thousands—brocade curtains, mosaics, exclusive wallpaper, panelling in precious woods. It was, however, not only Bouguereau and Titian

that Charles Schwab had in his gallery. There were originals by Rembrandt, Turner and Corot, and round the swimming pool, 'bigger than the one in Mr Kočí's garden at Chrudím', were marble Roman columns to make the image of ancient luxury complete. The library, which was adorned with the bust of Milton, French panelling and a mermaid mantelpiece, contained endless rows of books which nobody read, from the collected works of Dickens to a complete work on Egyptian antiquities, written at the order of Napoleon—whom Schwab admired—during his Egyptian campaign. Out of respect for his great hero, Schwab kept these ten volumes, each two and a half feet high, in a special locker with some other Napoleonic souvenirs. His cult of the great Emperor, however, was not restricted by any petty details of history. The music room boasted two golden cups that had once belonged to Napoleon, but also a counterpane from Marie-Antoinette's bed, which was used as a cover for the cream and gold piano with solid gold pedals. The house had three heating systems—hot water, steam and hot air—and a six-panel fuseboard with about a hundred switches to control the electric lights. It generated its own electricity, filtered its own water and required the service of six men to run its light and heat plants, including a fireman and a licensed engineer. The most memorable item in the house, however, was the enormous organ installed in the copy of the chapel at the Château de Chenonceaux, on which the building was modelled. The organ pipes which would not fit into the chapel were let into the walls, the longest bass pipes located in the cellar and some of the treble ones in the attic. When Archer Gibson played this mammoth organ while Charles Schwab was at the card table with his friends, the entire house reverberated like a great thunder-

ing instrument and the obbligato bass gave splitting headaches to the stokers, imprisoned with the roaring pipes in the boiler-room. Yet not even the organ survived. Since it was not worth salvaging the walled-in pipes, they were carted, bent and broken, with the rest of the masonry to the rubbish dump.

'Yesterday we were again in a lovely house,' wrote Maruška to her mother on 1 February 1907.

> It is on Fifth Avenue and once again of course the owner is a millionaire, Havemayer, the sugar king. The rooms are draped in Japanese silk embroideries and decorated with Moorish mosaics brought from Spain. The place is full of old tapestries, ancient Greek, Persian and Egyptian vases and statues. On the walls hang 8 Rembrandts, a Bronzino, a Holbein, a Fra Filippo Lippi, a Veronese, a Tiepolo, about ten Goyas, a Courbet, a Corot, a Manet, about 20 Degas—in short, its wonderful. In one room the Kneisel Quartet, the best in America, was playing Smetana, Dvořák and the Schubert Quartet for two cellos . . . Mr Havemayer is himself a cellist and Smetana and Dvořák are his favourite composers.

19 February:

> Charles R. Crane has arrived from Chicago and has invited the conductor, Saffonov, and us to dinner at a big hotel on Fifth Avenue. The dining-room was of course all in white marble, with rich bronze ornamentation, expensive carpets and flowers. After dinner we went to the theatre to see a new American play, *The Man of the Hour* . . . On Sunday we were again at the Schwab's for tea . . . Crane, of course, is a small millionaire compared to Schwab, but he is an intelligent, cultured person whereas Schwab is a parvenu from head to foot. He's not stuck up—far from it—but one is conscious that he didn't grow up amidst such splendour . . .

All these enormous houses, like the Schwab and the Havemayer piles, have gradually died out and disappeared

from the face of the earth—obsolete palaces of an Atlantis after the first boom of life on dry land. Some projects succumbed to the earliest tremors of the sinking continent almost as soon as they were completed.

In the spring of 1908 I had a visit from Dr Baumfeld [Mucha wrote], of Viennese origin. He told me straightaway that he had come as the representative of a committee composed of pure Germans. They intended to erect an entirely new luxury theatre in New York and needed my help. I asked Dr Baumfeld to show me what had already been done and what they planned, so that I could think the matter over, since the deadline was ludicrously short. The theatre was to be opened to the public on October 1st. In the evening I had all the necessary documents and the next day I met the manager, Mr Henri Blitz, together with Baumfeld, Burg and the architect, Hertz—the associate of Hertz and Tallent—and work started . . . It was no small task: all the available wall space in the auditorium was to be decorated with great hand-painted panels. I got down to it the very next day. I found an assistant, one of my Parisian pupils, named Kosa, who had helped me with the decoration of the Bosnian Pavilion, and I wrote to my friends the Nickersons at Cape Cod, asking them if they could rent me their boathouse where I could paint seven or eight of the pictures.

The decoration of the German Theatre at the corner of Madison Avenue and 59th Street was the last great work Mucha did in pure Art Nouveau style. The canvases which he had to cover in such a short time were 12 by 24 feet, representing the birth of Beauty, situated above the stage, with Comedy and Tragedy to the left and right of it. In addition there were large circular panels above the main boxes to be decorated.

You'd better paint less [wrote the practical Maruška from Chicago] and just supervise the rest . . . Please, for goodness sake, do be careful, the less you paint, the better it will be . . . With those huge dimensions you can't put only three figures

into one panel . . . it's better not to deceive yourself . . . four months is a terribly short time . . . The contract states that the paintings must be ready by September 1st and if you don't keep to this, you'll have to pay . . . I know you too well, you think you've got enough time . . . but you've never yet had anything ready as quickly as you expected.

The work was finally completed, but literally at the last minute, because apart from the pictures he was also responsible for the entire interior decoration of the auditorium. 'It was a difficult job,' he wrote to his sister Anna. 'Every day, or almost every day, I got up at 5 a.m., but I was in bed by 9 p.m. And so it went on . . . until . . . October 1st.'

The theatre had its gala opening with Ernst Wildenbusch's play *Die Rabensteinerin* which passed unnoticed. The building, however, was described as the most modern and technically most up-to-date theatre in New York. The decoration of the auditorium aroused a great deal of comment. 'The whole of New York is familiar with the soft colouring and graceful idea of Mucha's decoration,' wrote the *New York Playgraph* on the opening day. 'The panels Tragedy and Comedy, which hold part of the space usually devoted to boxes, are in his best vein . . .' The *New York Daily Tribune* published a full-page reproduction of the three best panels, and *Studio Talk* wrote: 'The panels . . . are Mucha's most mature work. Their size—12 × 24 feet—and the difficulties of keeping such a composition in one tonal plane will be appreciated by every mural painter.'

And yet, after a mere eight months, in spite of all the promise it had shown, the theatre closed down. On 9 April 1909, William Morris added it to his circuit of vaudeville theatres and renamed it the Plaza Music Hall,

but on 1 November the entire Morris circuit passed into the hands of Marcus Loew, who was busy building up his future film empire based on the 'nickel Odeons'. The theatre became the Plaza Cinema, probably the most famous of New York's cinemas until it finally closed down in 1929. This was during Prohibition and the Plaza was a safe meeting place for golden youth and the less high-class rowdies. While the silent films flickered on the screen to the orchestra's melancholy waltzes, lively cocktail parties were held in the first row of the balcony, ramifying into merry sexual frolics. Apart from that, young ladies could indulge here in smoking, a nefarious habit forbidden them in most public places, and frowned on even more than drinking. To keep matters within the bounds of decency, the ushers operated a special signal system of their own. Whenever the drummer in the orchestra noticed things getting out of hand in any of the boxes, he would produce a loud roll and the usher would tactfully arrive to arrange the hangings or remove a superfluous chair.

In the end, however, even the Plaza vanished. The building was pulled down in 1929, and all that remained of its glory and architectural beauty was a grateful memory in the hearts of those who had been young in the time of the silent films.

Mucha's next theatrical venture was also doomed to failure. In 1862 a certain Caroline Louise Dudley, slight in build, green-eyed and red-haired, was born in the state of Kentucky. 'A singularly eccentric woman,' was the judgement of her contemporaries. As a young girl she married a millionaire, Leslie Carter, but when she promptly spent the $10,000 household money on furs, there was a certain cooling off in the marital relationship.

In 1889 came the inevitable divorce, but the indignant Caroline swore revenge. She took her husband's name and declared that she would quickly make it many times more famous than its rightful owner. Miss Dudley, now Leslie Carter, threw herself into the theatre, but her first attempts were unsuccessful. N. K. Fairbanks, who had desperately invested huge sums in her, gave up hope and sent her to Belasco. This time she caught on. Belasco had a peculiar flair for making stars out of average actresses. As in a fairy tale, the giddy career of Leslie Carter went smoothly forward, so long as she did nothing that was forbidden. In 1905 she married a young actor, named Payne. 'Remember well my voice,' Belasco told her when she broke the news to him on the telephone, 'because you are hearing it for the last time.' But Leslie Carter believed that she no longer needed her magician. When Belasco let her know he was prepared to take her back if she got a divorce, she replied proudly: 'Every actress, even if she is under the management of Belasco, has the right to happiness.' The outraged bishop of Broadway—Belasco used to go about in a cassock and clerical collar—found it right and sensible to have nothing further to do with her.

Leslie Carter went on spending with pathological determination. Her wardrobe contained over a hundred dresses at an average cost of $250. She bought anything that took her fancy, in particular old lace and turquoise. Her apartment, in which she practically never lived, cost her annually $10,000. When on tour she insisted on having her own furniture and carpets everywhere. Before moving to another town, she would send on one of her secretaries to provide her with a plan of the hotel room, into which she drew the exact dispositions of the curtains, carpets, armchairs and beds which travelled with her in a special van.

Her aim was to surpass Sarah Bernhardt in splendour and, apart from her furniture and a business manager, she took with her a chauffeur, two secretaries, two chamber-maids and a Japanese bodyguard in oriental costume.

Bankruptcy came in 1908, and Leslie Carter's entire property was put up for auction. 'Nightcaps, stockings, hip pads—all go,' announced the huge headlines. 'Scramble for pink silk underwear.' 'Blue polka-dot wedding dress brought only 11 dollars.'

Leslie Carter refused to accept defeat and two months later was preparing a new super-production: *Kassa*, according to the programme, 'John Luther Long's dramatization of the story "The Broken Butterfly" in the ancient Hunnish book *Dragon of Care*.' The action, set in Hungary and Austria, was highly romantic. A girl named Kassa falls in love with Prince Bela who takes her off to Wallenwold Castle, deserts her and leaves her with a child. Kassa dreams of revenge, but in vain. Love will not allow her to act. At the end she returns, insane, to the convent she was due to enter a year ago when she met the faithless Bela, and it seems to her that only one single day passed in her tormented life.

In an article entitled 'The Value of the Painter's Genius in Stage Production', Leslie Carter wrote: 'Everything on the stage was left to the imagination of Mucha.' And further on: 'The question of expenses did not enter our relations at all.'

Only many years later Father told the story of his part in this $85,000 super-production:

> One day a sort of would-be Sarah came to see me in New York. She said she had decided to go into production and that with my help she would make a hit. I went along to the theatre. They were just in the middle of the first reading, so I gave them

my dispositions for the décor and costumes, and that was that. It was something about a 'chapelle miraculeuse', the setting was in Hungary, so the stage was full of strutting Magyars and Slovaks. She rehearsed, but all the time she was afraid to open up with it. She said: 'Now we'll go to Washington and do a few more rehearsals.' There was a drawing-room scene in the play and I went around shops buying clocks, silver tea-sets, tureens, draperies—all for a terrible lot of money. I also did an *affiche* for her. The whole thing was awfully elaborate, gypsies playing on the stage, a whole procession with a bishop and bells ringing —I didn't get to see the première in New York, but it didn't last long.

En route to Washington where they were to stage the first public performance on 7 January, he wrote to Maruška:

We have a special train. The actors, props and decorations—filled altogether about sixteen carriages . . . The impresario is Mayer—he was Sarah's agent on her world tour, so we had plenty to talk about on the journey. We also talked about inventions . . . He wants to introduce me to somebody regarding that patent of mine.

Yes, so strong was the influence of America that he saw the big money of his dreams not only in painting, but in what impresses America most, a gimmick. If others succeeded and with far more stupid ideas, why shouldn't he? Edison was a friend, Sprague the man who electrified the New York elevated, even more so. Money was just waiting to be picked up. 'My invention relates particularly to means for illuminating rooms and applying changeable mural decorations to the walls thereof,' reads the registration document.

My primary object is to provide simple and effective means whereby the lower portion of a room may be illuminated properly and whereby the upper portion of the room may, at

the same time, be changeably decorated through the medium of pictures projected thereon by magic lantern or analogous devices. The invention is illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

There follows a most engaging description:

The apparatus A consists of a lamp, a (shown as a group of incandescent gas mantles surmounting burners supported on a gas-pipe a_1); a depending globe a_2 through which light passes for illuminating purposes to the lower portion of the room; a shield, guard, or reflector a_3 projecting from the circumferential edge of the globe a_2; a series of horizontally disposed magic-lanterns a_4 supplied with light from the lamp a; an upwardly pointing magic-lantern a_5 lighted by the same lamp; a frame part, or hood, a_6 surmounting the lamp; asbestos a_7 between the lamp and lenses; and picture slides a_8 removably connected with the lantern tubes in the usual way. The details of construction are not regarded as essential.

In anticipation of the wealth deriving from this simple device, he staged *Kassa* with Leslie Carter in Washington.

When I got to the theatre today [he wrote on 3 January 1909], the sets for act one had already been built. It looks good, though a few changes will be necessary here and there, but on the whole it's going well. Then I returned to the hotel for lunch and back to the theatre . . . They were building for the second act . . . After dinner they did the third . . . Now the question arose whether or not the actors should come along and rehearse once the building was over, i.e. at 2 a.m., but it was decided it would be too late.

In another letter: 'I was up at 9 o'clock this morning and at 10 I was in the theatre . . . I got home at 3 p.m., had something to eat, and now I have to go back to try out the lighting.'

On 9 January, an impatient Maruška wrote: 'Be careful with Mrs Carter, don't let her flirt with you too much.

She's got a terrible reputation here and Eugenie tells me she is continually suing or being sued. Just you look out!'

But Father knew better.

> I have been working on the sets the whole evening [he wrote from Buffalo where there was to be another try-out] and she was re-writing one whole act over again. She was at it until 7 a.m. and tonight it will be done for the first time, without any rehearsal. I notice more and more that it wasn't Belasco who helped her but that it might have been possibly the other way round.

'The production will rank as one of the most ponderous attempts ever made on the American stage,' wrote the *Morning Telegraph* before the New York opening, for which Leslie Carter had chosen the Liberty Theatre, right opposite Belasco's headquarters. But her hopes of giving the bishop of Broadway a lesson did not materialize. *Kassa* was a total failure. Nothing could save the show, not even the '450 members of the *Pleyades* Club', who, as was reported in the Press, 'received after attending *Kassa* a Leslie Carter decoration—a button, designed by Alphonse Mucha with the Hungarian word "Pajtasi" (friendship)'. John Luther Long sued for $4,000 royalties and Father, who had made in all 250 drawings, evidently gave up without trying, since 'the question of expenses did not enter our relations at all'.

Fortunately not all his theatrical ventures in America ended so disastrously. If, as we shall see, he had not once again thrown up all his work at the decisive moment, he could have attained the same position in the New York theatrical world as he had in Paris.

There was Maud Adams whom he had met in Europe when she came over to see Sarah Bernhardt in *L'Aiglon* prior to appearing in the same part on Broadway. Rostand

had been so taken with her girlish charm that he had stipulated she must take the lead in his next Broadway production, the rather fantastic *Chantecler*. Aged twenty-eight, Maud Adams was so popular in the States that a statue of her by Miss Potter, representing the ideal American girl, was cast in 2712 pounds of solid gold worth $200,000 and displayed as the principal exhibit of the State of Colorado at the World Exhibition in Paris, where it stood on a pedestal made of the ore from which the gold had been extracted.

Maud Adams, daughter of the actress Mary Kiskadden, appeared on the stage when she was cutting her first teeth. Unable to stop her from crying, the desperate nurse took her to the theatre where her mother was starring in *The Lost Child*, and Mary Kiskadden took her on the stage in place of a wax doll. Maud immediately quietened down and from that moment remained true to the theatre. At the age of twenty she became famous in *The Masked Ball* with John Drew in the leading role, after which she went from one success to another, especially in the plays of J. M. Barrie. She had four hobbies: the harp, the banjo, horses and stage lighting. When Charles Frohman, the most successful theatrical agent of the day, fell in love with her roguish blue eyes, he cast her as Peter Pan in the J. M. Barrie play which ran to 711 performances, and an electrician by the name of Gottlieb, who operated the effects for Tinkerbell, went insane with love for her and had to be taken off to a lunatic asylum.

On 22 June 1909, Maud Adams was to appear as Schiller's *Maid of Orleans* before her biggest audience ever at the Harvard University Stadium. For this single performance Charles Frohman had engaged Father to design the stage and costumes and to supervise the direc-

tion. Nothing remains of this spectacular presentation except for the portrait of Maud Adams as Joan of Arc which was used as a poster and is now at the New York Metropolitan Museum.

'When Maud Adams walked silently under the star-sprinkled sky of Cambridge,' wrote a contemporary critic, 'she faced the greatest audience of her life, banked in a mighty semicircle round the huge oval that constituted the stage.' But success sometimes produces technical difficulties. The applause that burst forth was so deafening that the sheep which had come on to the stage with Joan the shepherdess took fright and scattered in all directions, and had to be rounded up in the surrounding fields.

After his successful début with Maud Adams, Father had his foot in the door of the American stage. He started another portrait, this time of Ethel Barrymore, the exact opposite of the gentle Maud with whom she first began her career in *Rosemary* in 1897. Daughter of Maurice Barrymore and niece of John Drew, she had moved in artistic circles since her childhood, lived up to the age of seven in London and was above all a great social figure, feeding the Press with her love affairs and broken engagements. From Harry Graham, a captain in the Coldstream Guards, via the Duke of Manchester, Prince Ranjitsinhji, Laurence Irving to Gerald du Maurier, she sampled all possibilities with protean capriciousness. 'One might link her to many things,' wrote Max Beerbohm, 'she reminds one from moment to moment . . . of a bird, a fairy, a child, a terrier, a flower, a what-not; but of a woman, never . . . Perhaps she can best be summed up as a pierrot.'

On 6 May, Maruška, who had just given birth to a daughter, sent a newspaper clipping to Father at Chicago with a peevish: 'What truth is there in this?'

Miss Ethel Barrymore will devote most of her leisure time during the remainder of her stay in Chicago to sitting for Alphonse Mucha, the distinguished painter, who has just received by cable from Charles Frohman, who is in London, a commission for an oil portrait of the star of *Lady Frederick.*

Portraits of famous actresses were great publicity, and together with the fact that a number of magazines, such as *Hearst's, Colliers, Lippincott's, Century* or the *Ladies Home Journal* were appearing with Mucha's cover designs, the compromise with his original decision not to return to Parisian regime constituted an undeniable success. He realized this and although he kept denigrating the *Documents Décoratifs,* he continued sending the originals to various exhibitions, observing with satisfaction that copies of his designs were now turning up in America even in such outstanding products as the silverware made by the Unger Brothers in Connecticut.

Mucha's pliability to commercial demands was probably due to the fact that he had a wide field of serious activity in his lectures at the Chicago Art Institute, where he regularly addressed more than five hundred pupils. He must have used an original method in teaching, since even now those of his former pupils who can still be found are able to produce some of his maxims almost word for word. Mr Edward A. Wilson, a distinguished New York graphic artist between the two world wars, now living at Truro, Cape Cod, spoke of how impressed the students were by the examples of design and composition Mucha sketched for them on big sheets of paper which he would then immediately tear off and throw away. 'It made us ill to think that at the end of the lecture so many beautiful drawings were ruthlessly burnt.'

According to Mucha [to quote Mr Wilson further] all the

laws of composition could be deduced from the 2 : 3 ratio which he saw confirmed everywhere in Nature. He pointed out to us that the same ratio applied to the petals and seed pods, the compositions of the old masters, the human body, the face or the hand. The eye itself focused on objects so as to see in this most satisfactory ratio. 'You do not look at the middle of a tree', he would say, 'but at a point two-fifths of its height from the ground.' And he was quite right.

All his decorative principles were derived from the physiology of the eye and in his mystical idealism he was completely unaware of the paradox that he was preaching materialist aesthetics. He recognized the part played by the spirit which 'invested the purely physiological process of perception with a certain moral value', but he found this to be only a secondary phenomenon.

'Grooves repeated in succession—man's first aesthetic expression—betray a sense of order, symmetrical grooves show even a certain incipient sense of balance, cogitation and repose . . . which to this day is the ethical basis of art,' he declared.

In the most artificial creations made by animals we find no embellishment, in other words no factor expendable in the construction and bringing material advantages.

What is the nature of pleasant or unpleasant sensations in seeing? . . . We know that the six muscles of the eye are there to fix the eyeball precisely on the observed object . . . If the eye follows a straight line . . . the one muscle whose function it is to turn the eyeball along that line contracts, the eye turns and observes. The longer the straight line, the greater the effort . . . and also the fatigue of that particular muscle. This fatigue is what actually determines the sensation derived from seeing. The eye will register the excessive strain put on one muscle as unpleasant, whereas a harmonious interchange of functions among all the six muscles will be experienced as pleasant—in other words, the eye prefers observing curves and circles where the

function of one muscle is freely and effortlessly taken up by another.

Man, however, is capable of experiencing . . . not only animal but also spiritual sensations . . . Taste, smell, touch convey animal sensations; sight and hearing, the spiritual ones . . . The fact that man is able to overrule his animal reactions by the spiritual ones differentiates him from the beast, enabling him not only to recognize beauty, i.e. the harmony between matter and spirit, but also to distinguish good from evil. The one supporting, the other destroying this harmony.

Who knows for how long the human artistic urge was satisfied with mere grooves in clay, wood and bone. Suddenly we stand in amazement before the images drawn with powerful strokes on the walls of caves. These are no more simple decorative lines but an evident expression of feelings overruling by far the animal sensations. They show that here was at work a weak creature, creating and confessing—man frightened and haunted by visions of danger and horror. Here he sought to liberate himself from fear, to master its forms. He dominated fear with the same spirit as had taught him to overcome and conquer the vast strength of the mammoth with arrow, spear and traps. Here on the wall of a cave . . . the victorious cry of the human spirit was conjured up by the primeval artist to remain fixed for all time. From that day until now we distinguish two currents in art: the one that aims to provide optimal conditions for the eyes' function, which resulted in what we know as decorative art, and the other that reflects spiritual sensations seeking to become the mirror of the artist's life and soul. Yet both these currents issue from one source—the quest for harmony . . . Beauty is a projection of physical harmonies into the spiritual plane. On these pillars rests the entire law of artistic creation: a logical ordering of perceived or felt elements in relation to the most important one of them all. This demands banning everything inessential and the strictest economy of means.

From his division of art into the animal and spiritual groups, it is clear why he defended himself so stubbornly against the former. The Creed also speaks of overcoming

'the world, the flesh and the devil'. Animal art was the devil, and if this was not overcome, there was not, figuratively speaking, any hope of salvation.

His demand for national art derived from similar reasoning: Humanity is the result of the development from clans to tribes and nations. 'Each nation has its own art, as it has its own language. Its tradition is not the property of one artist but of the entire community . . .' Because art is the soul of the nation and, as such, part of the soul of mankind, 'a nation has a warranted future in history only by what it has contributed to the spiritual development of the entire world'. Since progress proceeds from the individual towards larger and larger entities, 'each is required to begin with the education of himself and then with his environment—his family, community and nation'. That art as such could have no meaning without a wider context was self-evident. Progressive development, being the essence of existence, assigned to art the role of 'light that shines mankind on its way'.

In the spirit of these principles Father taught his Chicago pupils to draw and never omitted to stress the need for an American art, unfettered by foreign influences. 'I have never heard a more inspiring, more illuminating lecture on art,' wrote Anna Seaton Schmidt in a long article for the *Boston Transcript*.

> Each point that he wished to emphasize was illustrated by marvellous designs which he drew with extraordinary swiftness. A few bold lines and flowers bloomed on canvas, or seductive young women smiled upon the astonished student. But the value of the lecture lay in his insistence on the moral view of art; that nobility of character must be at the back of all great work, that conscientious, patient study of Nature could alone enable the student to 'arrive' even in imaginative decoration.

Farther on, Miss Schmidt quotes Mucha's words:

> Some of your schools still teach you to draw from casts of Greek statues. That foolish idea was imported from Europe. Draw from Nature alone—then you will have nothing to unlearn, which is the most difficult of all. No one under forty can hope to understand Greek art. It is the end, not the beginning! They eliminated all detail, and detail is what beginners must study. The Greeks did not learn their art by copying statues, they learned it from Nature. Nothing can be more fatal to the development of a great art than to copy the works made by another race.
>
> A Boston newspaper recently stated that I had come to New York to found an American school. How utterly absurd! I was much annoyed because it seemed so presumptuous on my part, when you have such fine schools of your own. I simply came here because I had had more than three hundred American students in Paris and it seemed better for me to come to them. I can only teach the grammar, the technique, not the art; that must come from within and should be that expression of their national life. How much better, then, for these young people to remain in their own country and absorb American ideals instead of French.

One day, destiny which for so long had been passively looking on while Father strove to follow the right road, intervened with its usual abruptness. Believing himself to be now finally near his goal, he once again rashly cancelled all his obligations, just as he had done in Paris, and forfeited the larger part of the fruits of the years spent in America.

29

CHARLES R. CRANE was rather a remarkable millionaire. While managing with intelligence his small kingdom of plumbing and elevators, he was interested in money only as a means of realizing his more idealistic aims. Deeply involved in history and politics, he was the real quiet American of his era, the grey eminence behind a number of upheavals and revolutions in Asia, whose role has not yet been properly evaluated. In 1879, as a young man, he set out on his first eastern voyage by sailing ship to the South Seas and then to Russia, where he pushed as far as dreaded Bukhara, a city embellished traditionally with the heads of suspect travellers stuck on the battlements of the Emir's palace. In 1894, he returned to Russia, struck up a friendship with Kornilov, Diaghilev and Korolenko, undertook a further journey to Bukhara, and returned from there via Persia. When two years later he visited Tolstoy in Russia, he was not only a Russophile but a very active element behind the scenes of intricate Slav politics. On his way back from Moscow, he stopped at Prague to meet T. G. Masaryk, then a professor of philosophy at the Charles University, in whom he immediately recognized not only an outstanding thinker but also the most realistic representative of the Slavs in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This was the beginning of a friendship which brought Masaryk to the United States where he married a Garrigue and during the First World

War in close operation with Wilson, organized the Czech resistance which was to play an important part in the eastern campaigns. After the break-up of Austria–Hungary in 1918, Masaryk become the first President of Czechoslovakia, Charles R. Crane's son, Richard, was appointed United States Ambassador in Prague and his sister Frances married Masaryk's son, Jan.

Crane's interest in the Slavs and Russia also had its practical aspect. In 1905 he built a vast factory in Petrograd and from here extended his influence to the Far East and China. By 1909 his inside knowledge of the Chinese scene and especially his contacts with the radical Kuomintang were of such a nature that President Taft decided to appoint him United States Minister in China. Crane, however, soon relinquished his post and returned to his less overt activities which were more in keeping with his character. He saw with fascination that the world was beginning to move and was ready to assist any rebellion that promised to speed up this process. His influence and money operated from the China Seas to the Middle East, in support of the Kurdish uprising, Sun Yat-Sen's unification of China or Kemal Ataturk's revolution which swept away Turkish feudalism. This quiet American's millions disappeared in the mountains of Irak, the Siberian tundras, the deserts of China, lighting fires, arming bearded tribesmen and undermining a structure which was to collapse once and for all under the impact of the Second World War.

Unassuming, calm, with an inscrutable face and a strangely introverted look, Crane observed everything but spoke only when it was absolutely necessary. He had the air of a chess-player tirelessly pondering the next move of his bishop, knight or castle. He constituted in his own way

an intelligent expression of that same hypertrophy of a society which produced the palaces of the Schwabs, Havemayers and Goulds. What he constructed was infinitely greater, abstract and yet much more real, since it was not made of dead stones but of people, blood and gunpowder. His character is best exemplified in his reply to King Ibn Saud, who out of gratitude offered him the exploitation of all the oil resources of Arabia: 'No, thank you. I want you to know that an American doesn't always have to make money.'

Mucha first met Charles R. Crane in 1904 at a banquet at Delmonico's which was an unofficial demonstration for Russia at war with Japan—unofficial since Japan had the sympathy of the United States. Having organized Slavs wherever he went, Father seized this opportunity of founding an American Slav Association, thereby attracting the attention of his taciturn neighbour at the presidential table. Crane observed him thoughtfully for some time and then handed him his visiting card.

A year later chance brought them together once more in Chicago. Father was greatly struck by this American who understood the Slav problem so well, while Crane found most sympathetic Mucha's eccentric desire to work for his nation with no profit to himself. Masaryk was a philosopher with a clear political plan. Mucha's fantasy provided what Masaryk lacked—a Slav messianism. They saw a great deal more of each other during Father's work on the paintings for the German Theatre. Crane had a house at Woods Hole, Mass., a few dozen miles across the Cape from East Brewster where Father was doing his painting in the Nickersons' boat-house. Charles Crane would drive over for long silent visits, listen to Father's views on the tasks facing the Slavs in the forthcoming

history of Europe and sometimes bring with him his friend, Woodrow Wilson, then a professor at Princeton University. Here, among canvases dedicated to German dramatic art, in the summer heat saturated with the smell of paints, varnish and linseed oil, they were unwittingly preparing the future map of Europe.

When Crane's daughter Josephine married Harold C. Bradley, her father had a house built for them by Sullivan at a cost of $50,000 and commissioned Mucha to paint a portrait of Mrs Josephine Crane Bradley, representing the symbolic figure of Slavia. Sullivan incorporated the picture into the overall interior decoration and the house, thanks to this and other experiments, was becoming a worthy example of the American Art Nouveau style. When Roger Williams, Crane's secretary, observed with alarm that the costs already exceeded the budget by far and wanted to stop further payments, Sullivan told him haughtily: 'What's the good of millionaires if we can't experiment with their money?'

The story of this peculiar portrait of an American heiress sitting in a tree as a Slav goddess did not, however, end there. Years later, in 1918, when the first Czechoslovak banknotes were printed in the United States, there was no time to commission a design and the Crane-Bradley Slavia was used as the main symbolic motif on the hundred-crown note which remained in circulation practically until the Second World War. It became, quite understandably, one of the most popular of Father's designs, but the original has in the meantime vanished.

Shortly after the Crane-Bradley Slavia, Charles R. Crane commissioned a portrait of his second daughter, Frances Leatherbee, who was later to become Mrs Jan

Masaryk. Unlike the picture of Josephine which was painted in the typical decorative style, this portrait was a traditional oil painting. Judging from various remarks in his letters Father would have liked in it to surpass Sargent, who had also painted Frances Crane, but probably unsuccessfully, since his work had been cut to pieces one day by the dissatisfied owner in a fit of anger. Everything, however, conspired to protract this interminable portrait. First Father was held up by the intermezzo with Leslie Carter. Then he lost a great deal of time organizing the 'Modern Athenian' with the infamous Mrs McKay. Next Mrs Leatherbee became pregnant and could not sit for him. Father considered this moment to be the most propitious for disclosing to Charles Crane the plan which had been maturing in him for so many years: to devote the rest of his life to painting a series of twenty huge murals as a symbolic presentation of the history of the Slavs from ancient times to the present day. He explained to him that he had moved to America to earn sufficient money to enable him to offer the work as a gift to the city of Prague, but that in spite of all his efforts he still did not have the necessary means.

There was no denying it—all the apparent success had not essentially improved his financial situation. He was still paying back the loan contracted before his marriage, for the purpose of buying himself out of his Parisian engagement and undertaking the expensive move to New York. A number of commissions, such as the work for Leslie Carter, had remained unpaid, and all the income from the Art Institute went on his household which was conducted with the same regal magnificence as in Paris. He had to find some radical solution if the entire project was not to remain a mere dream. In desperation he opened

his heart to Crane and asked him outright whether he would finance the technical side of the work.

Crane showed immediate interest. He was keeping an entire Russian symphony orchestra in New York and had paid the fares of many a visiting artist. The amount required was not large when compared with the overall sum he spent on the Slavs, but the whole plan needed careful thought. Father's enthusiasm impressed him, but the question was whether it would last for so many years back in Bohemia, once the country ceased to be a distant myth and became the reality which Crane knew all about from Masaryk.

His answer, after the usual period of silence, was encouraging but non-committal. In principle he approved of the idea but only undertook to arrive at a decision once he had studied the budget and the time schedule. Whereupon he took his leave and went off to see his Arabs in Egypt.

For Father there was no such thing as a middle road. It was sufficient that Crane had not rejected his proposal for him to be firmly convinced that he was reaching his goal. He informed the Art Institute that he was discontinuing his lectures, dispatched Maruška to Bohemia to look for a studio, refused to accept any further work and waited for news. 'But how am I to sustain it?' he wrote to Maruška. 'He doesn't know it's a matter of life and death . . . Finally I'm on the road, on the right road, for which I've been preparing myself so long . . . Now at last I'm beginning to live . . . Up to now—no, it hasn't been deceit, but half-dreaming, half-awake, it hasn't been me. Today life is opening before me and I have to wait passively.'

Beneath this exultation, however, there was growing

anxiety which by the end of the year was to change into barely concealable despair. In Prague a further possibility of work came up, work that deeply concerned him—not financially but for reasons of principle. The City of Prague had built a new Municipal Building in pure Art Nouveau style, containing a large concert hall, exhibition rooms, reception halls and also a restaurant and café on the street level. Now that the building was finished and the interior artistic decoration was to be started, a storm brewed up that was to be Mucha's first encounter with the Czech public.

> I saw Srb, the Lord Mayor of Prague [he wrote to Maruška from Paris] and the Czech delegation. We spoke about the Germanization of Prague through the Secession and of my fears regarding the Muncipal Building. Now my mind is at rest because the Lord Mayor has assured me that he is as great an enemy of the Secession and its apostles as I am.

In the summer of 1909, he was approached by the architect Polívka with the offer that he should design the decoration of the Municipal Building and that as soon as the city signed the relevant contract with him he should come to Prague to do the frescoes in the various rooms. Thinking purely of the national significance of this work, Mucha accepted the offer and his immediate concern was that the fee should be so calculated as not to bring him in any profit. Right to the end of his life he insisted that work for the nation must not be sullied by financial interest and, in all he undertook for public use, whether it was stamps, banknotes or the State emblem, he submitted designs either free of charge or at minimum cost.

> My aim was to make money abroad and to give my nation what it needed free. I know that people may laugh at these ideas of mine, but that's how it is, and that's that. The very thought of

deriving profit from this sacred cause was always abhorrent to me. And yet I must live—my family must live—and here I came up against the utter absurdity of my principle. But I would not give in. Finally I found a formula for solving this problem. For the decoration of the Municipal Building I had to prepare myself and work out sketches. I was willing to accept reimbursement of my expenses connected with this, but I asked nothing for the actual painting. I also donated to the city all the paintings which I used as studies—that is, three figural compositions, a ceiling and eight other panels—12 canvases in all, the three largest of which were awarded gold medals in London. I did them free of charge for the sole purpose of wiping out the sin I had committed in allowing the work to be in any way connected with money.

When, however, the Prague artists learnt that somebody had considered entrusting the decoration of the Municipal Building to Mucha without their knowledge, they unleashed an hysterical campaign. In long, offensive articles they accused Mucha of attempting to by-pass the competition to secure a valuable commission for himself at their expense. 'Incredible things are going on here,' Maruška's mother Emilia wrote to his sister Anna. 'Alphonse has no idea of it at all. I have just read two more horrible articles . . . It's unbelievable how wicked they can be.' On 26 November 1909 Maruška wrote to America: 'They're lashing out at you in helpless envy and it's sad to think that these are colleagues and friends . . . I went to see Polívka to ask him to clear your name in the newspapers, to explain that it wasn't you but he who made the offer. He promised to do something but he hasn't done anything so far.'

'Naturally Mucha is not in close touch with our life,' wrote Hladík in his column, the only one to stand up for him in public, 'he is not a member of any artistic associa-

tion, he is not boosted by any clique, and so the meanest journalist . . . can find the courage to trample on him . . . on his own authority.' In her next letter Maruška writes:

> You just can't imagine the shameless attacks being made on you. Not only 'Manes' but also the Union of Artists have joined in . . . They have all the newspapers on their side . . . Nothing is too low for them to stoop to . . . You've no idea how it hurts when I see them dragging your name in the mud. This is your reward for all you've done for Bohemia. Now you're being stoned by the very ones you have given yourself for. And they laugh at your patriotism.

It was a terrible awakening out of dreams, made all the worse by the fact that Crane's reply, to which he clung as his sole means of deliverance, still did not come. Meanwhile, with having to wait in America with no orders and no lecturing, his financial reserves were running out. He found himself in such difficult circumstances that he accepted an invitation to go to Lake Forest, where the Leatherbee family was living, in the hope of being paid once he had finally completed the portrait. 'If it weren't for this affair with the Municipal Building I would never have got into this position . . . But it's happened, and I'm glad I can see things clearly.'

This final remark by way of self-assurance was purely rhetorical, since otherwise he could not have taken a step which aggravated matters in Prague even more. Convinced that Crane would finance his Slav Epic and worried about the loss of precious time, he wrote to the Lord Mayor of Prague, offering his pictures to the city and asking him to have a special building put up for them.

> Yesterday, when I read of your writing to the city council regarding the erection of a building for your work, I was immediately scared by your wanting something from them before

the affair of the Municipal Building is over [wrote Maruška]. I went to see Groš, the Lord Mayor, who said he would submit your suggestion to the council but that a decision could not be arrived at straightaway. He said you're much too impractical to have any idea how such councils work. These are his words: 'We are a poor community, and from the dimensions given by your husband, the thing would be so huge that the community could hardly bear such vast expsense.' You know, darling, I'm afraid that the enormous dimensions of your canvases may well prove a stumbling-block . . . And if they don't accept it, then you can't offer it to the nation, the nation is not a legal entity . . . Why did you stipulate the place where it is to be? The main thing is to have the contract with Crane.

Father was an idealist with fantastic ideas, but he was not a fool. He knew that the situation could not be blacker or more hopeless, but he refused to accept it. 'I have sacrificed too much for this result,' he wrote. 'It has been a lottery on which I have staked all.' He had no choice in the matter. Moreover, in his most difficult moments he was supported by his old and proven belief in the directing will of destiny. If it was indeed his mission to give meaning to his life through this work, then it would come about, even if the whole world put obstacles in his way. If destiny did not help him, then he was wrong and the higher powers had other designs for him.

November and December passed, and Christmas approached. To keep himself from having to think, he worked at Mrs Leatherbee's portrait, and when he was not painting he occupied himself making a detailed model in wood and plaster of their future country home. Thus, by chance, he realized his only architectural project: strictly utilitarian, simple, putting into effect the principles announced by Loos and Wright.

Winter has gripped the world [he wrote]. Frost, snow and

everything that belongs to Christmas. In the afternoon we went to some friends to hear Rachmaninov playing his own compositions. In the evening there were bells, the dusk, snow, Christmas Eve, but in America they have their Christmas tree the following morning. And so we got up early and congregated in the drawing-room where the tree was all lit up and the present-giving began. Naturally I didn't expect anything, my presents belonged to my far-off Maruška, but Mrs Leatherbee bent down to the fireplace and—'Look!' she told me, 'there is something for you too.' I looked—and indeed there was. A big stocking marked with my name. Something rustled inside it. A painful twinge went through me. It occurred to me there might be some money in it and so I hesitated to open it. But finally I decided to, and after undoing several wrappings of tissue paper I came upon a telegram. It was from Cairo, short but eloquent. 'Tell Mucha everything satisfactory see Roger Williams.'

'Crane has accepted my proposal without changes,' he wrote at once to Maruška in great excitement.

I've already received the first cheque, 7500 dollars . . . I've bought tempera paints and I'll start trying them out . . . maybe they'll be better than the oil or wax ones because I can work better on them with the oil paint finish . . . My work must be like an outcry without any precious bravura technique. Honestly felt, honestly executed.

Also the slanderous campaign regarding the Municipal Building came to an end. The city council wisely decided to divide the work between Mucha and various other painters, and the Prague artists calmed down. It seemed that Father's escape from Paris and his stubborn attempts to break away from decorative work had brought him to his goal. The question of whether it was the right goal remained.

30

THE world which had emerged from the waters and set up its proud symbols, the Statue of Liberty and the Eiffel Tower, sank back step by step into the sea. The palaces of Atlantis with their copies of discus throwers and Apollo Sauroctonos echoed with emptiness, their marble swimming baths went dry, their winter gardens ran wild, their gilded furniture slumbered under white sheets. Clumsy automobiles drove the nimble-footed horses off Fifth Avenue and the Champs-Elysées, vaudeville gave way to flickering movie romances, mass-production flooded the market with bronze nymphs and clocks in the form of *tableaux vivants*.

Sarah Bernhardt, still clinging to the pinnacle of her fame, had to have a leg amputated. Many years before she had cut it on a rusty nail and had been fighting a losing battle against the consequences ever since. The leg withered away and it became increasingly difficult for her to conceal her infirmity. 'Madame,' said Barnum one day to her, 'I will give you 50,000 dollars for your leg if you will allow me to exhibit it in spirit.' Sarah turned the offer down, but subsequently, when during her stay in New York the leg became gangrenous and surgical intervention could not be put off any longer, she sent word to Barnum. But the great showman was dead by then and his successors were not interested. The leg was amputated and, weighted with a heavy stone, secretly buried in the depths of the Hudson.

True to her motto 'Quand même', Sarah continued acting on one leg, and the public came in reverent awe to see this living monument from the days when their fathers were young. 'Here she comes,' murmured Tristan Bernard as the traditional 'trois coups' were heard before the curtain rose. Robert de Montesquiou, who used to write his sonnets in red ink sprinkled with gold dust, slipped unobtrusively out of the land of the living into the pages of Proust. In the middle of the Atlantic, with all her lights on and her orchestra playing, the *Titanic* went down with fifteen hundred passengers aboard.

The age drew to a close, but Father was still unable to bid it farewell. He commuted between New York and Paris, secretly tormented by doubts as to whether he had done right in abandoning the one city that had understood him. He wrote to Maruška.

> On Sunday I went to see Rodin at Meudon and stayed until the evening. Today I had to go to his studio and he showed me the portrait of Ryan and other Americans. Then we went to the Champs-Elysées for lunch and once again I had to go back with him as he wanted me to choose two drawings delightfully inscribed . . . It's a good thing that I've come here and been seen around. Various rumours have been going round about my being seriously ill, in a lunatic asylum . . . I have been able to see that just about all of them would like to have me back there . . .

In another letter he writes:

> I have been to the Panthéon where I stayed till midday. I was glad to see all the pictures again. I still like Jean-Paul best of all and then Puvis de Chavannes. The others I like less—except for the Bonat and Galland, who wear very well . . . Then I went to see Buisset, the painter. He had a lot of people there, some I knew and some I didn't, and I stayed to dinner with them.

And in another letter:

Yesterday I went to see Seysses, the sculptor; he was delighted that we were together again. I also visited Bourrelier . . . and met several publishers, old friends—there was a lot of embracing and happiness . . . I also went to see Clairin where I met Detaille and they both suggested I should exhibit here . . . saying that I ought to help against the new tendencies here called 'cubist' (from the cube because they do everything in squares) . . . They are all very kind and everybody is glad to know that I was still working when I disappeared from the scene here. Especially Clairin, Detaille and Lalique. When I went to see Clairin he had just received the carton with all my reproductions and was showing it to somebody . . . I am going to see Sarah tomorrow and in the evening I shall see her at the theatre . . . Bourdelle was also very pleased that we should meet again . . .

1 December:

I see that I have not become a stranger to Paris, that the atmosphere here gives me strength—and from here I can see clearly all the petty struggles in our country . . . These few days in Paris have re-established me where I was . . . I had thought that with the short memory of the Parisians, I should not be able to feel my way so securely to my buried roots, but everywhere I have found it's just the opposite.

5 December:

I have met Widhopf, the Russian, my old friend from the Munich time. So I took him with me . . . and we've been talking ever since. After supper I'm going to the Odeon where they're doing Dickens's *Copperfield*—I've forgotten the first word in the title.

7 December:

I've been to see Champenois . . . they were very pleased to see me and I stayed until midday. They're also packing me up a copy of all my works and they'll be sending it to me tomorrow.

8 December:

> Today I went once again to see Champenois and Rodin and I was out the whole day.

The same words keep cropping up, whoever he went to see: they were glad to see him, agreed with what he was doing, had the same opinions. He felt the earth moving under his feet, he knew he had to leave, but desperately wanted to hear that his way out was the right one.

'I shouldn't like to work in Prague,' he wrote to Maruška.

> It would be like painting in the street. All the time somebody would be coming up to me and before anything was finished they'd be talking about it and criticizing it. This way nobody can say anything until it is ready, and it won't be ready until I'm absolutely satisfied with it, and I shan't be satisfied until it is really good . . .

But it was not only Paris that claimed him. There was also America where all through 1910, 1911 and 1912 he did not complete the portrait of Frances Leatherbee. He was now taking on commitments again, shorter ones which he could get done in two or three months, lecturing at Chicago, Boston, Milwaukee, Philadelphia; planning with Hertz a mural for the La Salle Hotel—but what tied him most was the ill-starred portrait, his last link with a disappearing world.

Once again he returned to Europe for a short time, wound up the final details at the Val de Grâce and undertook study tours in the Slav countries for his forthcoming work. Wherever he travelled, in Russia, Poland, Serbia, Bulgaria, he went as the apostle of Pan-Slavism, trying to win over kings, scientists, artists or monks at their mountain monasteries. He travelled by stage-coach or mule, his

sketchbook in his hand and an ancient camera slung over his shoulder; he made hundreds and hundreds of drawings and took hundreds and hundreds of photos which were either spoilt straightaway or later when he developed them himself. In those photographs that have managed to survive all the disasters, bearded orthodox priests are floating in double exposure over the rooftops of Balkan cottages, men in baggy trousers are striding over lakes, Bosnian women sit spinning on the funnels of ancient locomotives and through a window with a view of the Mostar a pair of heavy oxen are pulling a jumbling cart.

'I travelled into Montenegro from Dubrovnik,' he wrote.

> First by ship to Kotor where I had to take a coach to get to Cetyne, the royal capital high in the mountains. There was some sort of bus there, but I wanted to see the countryside and in any case I was a bit afraid of that vehicle. When I got there after I don't know how many hours, I put up at the Grand Hotel, which resembled a low sprawling farmhouse in one of our villages. I ordered coffee, but they gave me condensed milk with it. When I objected they offered me goat's milk. No cow's milk. Apparently there's only one cow at Cetyne and that belongs to the Queen. So I took what there was, but I had only been sitting for a while when news reached the court that I was there, and the King sent a courtier for me.
>
> The trouble was I had no proper black clothes with me. The ministers were all terribly worried about this and racked their brains as to how they could take me there in such a disrespectful suit. Everything here is just like among peasants, it is true, but still a king is a king. The ministers finally decided they would lend me something, but all these Montenegrans are as tall as mountains, and when I put on their trousers there was half a yard trailing on the floor and the buttons at the back of the jacket were somewhere down at my knees. The only person more or less my size was the King, but I couldn't possibly borrow trousers from him. So in the end I wore my grey travel-

ling ones and borrowed a jacket. It must have looked pretty funny.

Dressed up in this way I was taken to their royal building. The King had various presents in his rooms which he had received from his colleagues. One of these, I forgot who it was, had sent him a billiard table. A beautiful, inlaid billard table. Only it could not be used because it was large, the space was small, and there was no standing room round it.

When we reached the main hall, we found it full of generals and ministers, so I backed up against the window and waited. A moment later they came and took me to the first floor where there was a large room full of chairs and palms. Obliquely across the room appeared the King in full regalia, with a lot of decorations, gold and brocade. He came up to me and so we got talking. Then he led me into a smaller room. A table was brought and covered with a brocade—also, no doubt, a present—and wine was poured out. Nikola said he had something of mine and asked if I would sign it. It was my 'Lord's Prayer'. So we discussed this work and everything imaginable. The King is a very clever man and one can talk to him about anything. As he was handing me the 'Lord's Prayer' he upset the bottle of wine on the brocade. The servants quickly went and brought another one and this time he was more careful. When I left I kept talking so that he should accompany me most of the way to the door. I didn't want him to see what my jacket looked like from the back, with these two buttons deep down under my knees.

In spite of Father's sincere interest in them, the Balkan Slavs with their embroidered skirts, plus-four trousers, sandals and Turkish knives thrust in their sashes, were in his eyes a curiosity. A sort of large Madame Tussaud's in the original environment. And as for their kings—even with all his inborn respect for crowned heads, he could not take them seriously. Their courts struck him as operatic, full of cheap pomp, and he could never forget that the Bulgarian King Ferdinand came of the German Coburg family and that the country drew half its culture

from Germany. It was only in Russia that the gates to the ancient Slav homeland of his dreams opened up to him, and what he saw filled him at the same time with anguish and mystical excitement. In Holy Russia, endless and backward, he found himself in the age of the icon, golden domes, troikas and crazed pilgrims, in a world of old chants, life-bearing rivers and steppes stretching away into the mournful, insuperable distance. He sensed what gave birth to that passionate inertia of the nameless crowds that have poured into realistic Europe over the Urals, the Dnieper and the Pripet Marshes. He recognized his own origin, he was caught up by the nostalgia of the centuries which bound him to that origin, but it filled him with the same dread that haunts our dreams with the memory of the dark maternal womb. He belonged to those fanatical, stagnating masses and yet he moved among them as a foreigner.

'Chants, choirs, everything utterly Byzantian and Slav . . . it is as though one were living in the ninth century,' he wrote to Maruška.

> The people kneel and pray, perhaps without even understanding what they are praying, and bow their heads right to the ground. Perhaps they are thrilled by all this fabulous glitter, wealth and glory of colour—the very gold and silver on the icons prevents them from seeing the black painted head of the saint . . . I stood behind a pillar and watched two old women . . . their feet bound in cloth tied round with straps, wearing black blouses and red kerchiefs on their heads, they stole through the church like thieves, emerged in the darkness behind the pillars, stood speechless with open mouths, looked round and nodded their heads. Then they crept past the gold and silver iconostasis with halos glowing round the heads of the saints, nothing but gold, nothing but gold and the smell of incense. They were in ecstasy. One of them, her hands clasped, kept repeating: 'That's

heaven itself.' Such is their religion—ancient paganism. Nothing has changed in 2000 years, except that the names are a bit different.

He was aware that the new continent for which he was about to set sail—to which he wanted to devote himself like a monk entering a monastery—would not be a happy reunion but rather life in the wilderness. The attacks he had sustained in connection with the Municipal Building were merely a prologue. Maruška also faced him with stern truths. 'You just don't see yourself,' she wrote to him in America on 23 February 1913.

I'm going to tell you everything. If you get angry, that means you won't have understood me. The very first year in New York—it wasn't because you didn't have anything that I got annoyed, but because you didn't bother about the things you could have had. You will remember how much we needed the Schwab's order at that time. And you would have got it if you had been prepared to do the kind of painting you had always done—and which wasn't beneath your dignity. As I see it, every subject is beautiful if done by a great artist. Previously, let me tell you, you didn't always do things that were up to your dignity, but in this case you became obstinate and started forcing upon this positive-minded American some sort of abstract truths. When I begged you to change your attitude, you wouldn't. Those were two blows for me. The first because you weren't prepared to make the necessary concessions to get the order, the second because you wouldn't take my advice, although other people could always make you do what they wanted (Prout and others). It was only my ideas you always found unacceptable. It's really strange . . . you'll do the most impossible things for strangers, almost as though they had the power of suggestion over you . . . You left the Archbishop's portrait with an utter stranger, you set about founding a society with an unknown adventuress . . . but you don't want me to enter the workshop of your soul. You want your wife to be like all the others, passive . . .

She was right. He was pig-headed and blind because so many things he did and the way he did them pointed to his being in the wrong. In Paris, from the very outset, he did not trust the one adviser he could have fully relied on, namely his gift for drawing. It was too simple for him, too ordinary, too much of a craft. It was not allowed to exist in its own right, it had to be made to serve something higher, something more noble—Beauty, God, the Nation. Herein lay his tragedy, as he was sometimes aware and for this very reason was so stubborn in going his own way. He would draw anything—even a cover for *Town Topics*—so long as he was unaware that he was contradicting himself. Then suddenly and inconsistently he would become obstinate and no power in the world could shift him. If ever, even for a single moment, he were to allow the possibility of error in his theoretical construction, he would have had, with his uncompromising nature, to return right back to the rue Bara and start again, even at the age of seventy.

But neither in the past nor in the next phase of his life, did his experience force him to any such drastic conclusion. In spite of all the obstacles that he put in his own way, he succeeded in making his name famous in America and acquired the financial means he went there to get. The cycle of paintings, the Slav Epic, on which he worked for twenty years, did indeed amaze the world—the exhibition of the first canvases in New York and Chicago in 1920–1 was seen by more than 600,000 people and the Press compared him to Tiepolo. His big Parisian exhibition in 1936 at the Musée de Jeu de Paume proved to him that even in the city of his youth he was not forgotten. The ordinary people of his native country honoured him and gave him countless proofs of their love. But he was never appointed

a professor at the Prague Academy and his Slav Epic never found a dignified and permanent home throughout his lifetime—and, when he died, Abbot Zaoral who had married him at the St Roche Chapel in Strahov Monastery refused to officiate at his funeral on the grounds that Mucha, a supreme commander of the Free Masons, was not a good son of the Church.

In 1913, the epoch of carriages, furniture in the form of flowers, Sarah Bernhardt, millionaires' castles, balloons, the cancan, patchouli and devout, optimistic lies was over. Atlantis was inexorably going under, and from the waters rose the contours of new lands: Mary Pickford, the Ford motor-car, mustard gas and the short skirt.

Art Nouveau, abandoned by its parents on the doorstep of the twentieth century, was exposed to abuse from all directions as an unwanted orphan. In France, where it had grown up, it was accused of alien origin: Guimard was a Jew, Mucha was a foreigner, Horta was a socialist. In 1904, the 'La Rose de France' exhibition was organized with the object of counteracting foreign influences by healthy homemade trade. What confusion—recalling Mucha's attacks on the Viennese 'Secession'!

By the irony of destiny, one of the main opponents of Art Nouveau, whose arguments became common property, was a man born in 1870, a mere twenty miles from Ivančice, Adolf Loos. When Loos was learning to walk in Brno, Mucha was earning his daily bread singing high mass in the choir of St Peter's. He lived in America from 1893 to 1896 and subsequently in Vienna from where he conducted his campaign for a new, simple architecture, shorn of ornamentation, purposeful and monumental. Himself brought up in Art Nouveau, he became so thorough in his opposition as to claim that there was a

direct connection between the elimination of ornament and the cultural maturity of a nation, maintaining that people would only have to work four hours a day if ornamentation were to disappear from the world market. The attacks sustained by Art Nouveau were more than mere reaction, they were a revulsion. A volte-face is usual at the passing of a style, but never before had it occurred with such violence and hysteria. The strangest aspect of the matter is that this had already been present in the split consciousness of its own creators. 'Your architecture will be simple,' Mucha had said.

> It will have columns built of a single block . . . it will recall the grandeur of the Temple of Solomon and the Egyptian pyramids. Ornate effects, decorated windows, fantastic architecture will have disappeared and a style vast, large, pure and grandly simple will have taken its place.

The *coup de grâce* came on 17 February 1913. Besides Elsie de Wolf and Elisabeth Marburg, Mucha's intellectual friends from down-town New York included such people as Mrs Mabel Dodge, who fed the fighters for everything new in art and public life on tea and cakes at her old home on the corner of 9th Street and 5th Avenue, and with her indomitable energy hurled herself into the battle for Free Speech, Psycho-Analysis, New Art, New Poetry and Birth Control. Her drawing-room with its white and gold French furniture and Venetian candelabras was the meeting place for A. A. Brill, the apostle of Freud, 'Big Bill' Haywood, the leader of the O.W.W., Mrs Margaret Sanger, who was imprisoned for propagating birth control, Elisabeth Gurley Flynn, the trade unionist, Marsden Hartley, the modernist, and anybody else who was prepared to fight conventional public opinion in any way at all.

Over cups of tea, these crusaders of the new era developed a project whose true significance eluded even those present. Up to that time official American circles had ignored modern European art—including even the Impressionists. A group of artists, who established a new society entitled the Association of American Artists and Painters, worked out a plan for demonstrating their somewhat vague progressive attitudes in an exhibition that would present their work to the American public in the context of contemporary art in Europe. The inspirators themselves, and Mucha was one of them, were far from being extremists. But once they had the necessary funds and the project began to take shape, they gave full rein to their ambitions. The driving spirit of the exhibition was Arthur B. Davies, a tame landscape painter but an authority on modern French art, and Walter Kuhn, who acted as secretary to the Association. The latter went off to Europe to collect exhibits and met with so much understanding that when the results of his activity were summed up, it was found that the exhibition had at its disposal 1600 paintings and sculptures from home and abroad.

Undismayed by the mounting, unpaid bills, the organizers found suitable premises in the Armoury of the 69th Regiment at the corner of Lexington Avenue and 25th Street. They decorated the main hall with green garlands and shrubs in wooden flower-pots, divided up the wall space with improvised partitions and packed home their dynamite.

The opening on the evening of 17 February precipitated an explosion of several megatons. It was not just that the visitor was now able to see with his own eyes pictures which up to then he had only heard of from ironical critics; it was also that these works were served up to him

alongside the acknowledged masters and thus, to his horror, placed on a level with art with a capital A. This was an affront to social convention. To place Ingres and Picasso under the same roof was as shocking as to see a lady turn up at a party with her illegitimate daughter.

The beginning was unobtrusive enough. Statues by Bernard and Jo Davidson had been placed at the entrance, and the first room presented a survey of French painting from neo-classicism to Cézanne. Then came some less happy meetings—people who ate with a knife such as Seurat, Gauguin and van Gogh, but along with them pleasant guests such as Puvis de Chavannes and Rodin, and one entire room was devoted to the symbolic fantasies of Odilon Redon.

The worst shock came at the end of the exhibition: Rouault's 'Parade', Matisse's 'Nasturtiums', Derain's 'Window on the Park', the cubists—Picasso's 'Woman with the Mustard Pot', Picabia's 'Dance of the Spring'—and most provocative of all, Marcel Duchamp's 'Nude Descending the Staircase'.

There was universal indignation. Cortissoz, a critic on the *Century Magazine*, declared that Cézanne was a complete ignoramus, van Gogh a crazy incompetent and Picasso a man whose unadulterated cheek resembled that of Barnum. As usual, he went on to accuse all concerned of smuggling foreign influences into America. Large crowds thronged the exhibition and scenes took place that were reminiscent of the first showings of Impressionist paintings. Caruso was so furious that he drew caricatures of various pictures and handed them out to all and sundry. The sixty-five-year-old Tiffany declared that the Modernists 'wander after curiosities of technique, vaguely hoping that they might light on some invention which will

make them famous. They do not belong to art, they are untrained inventors of the process of art.'

Mucha was naturally also at the opening and that same evening he wrote to Maruška:

> It was tremendously interesting. From the best European works to the cubists and futurists . . . in painting, sculpture and architecture. There were some terrible things so that I often had to stop still and just laugh . . . It is a syndicate of sheer cranks. A typical psychological phenomenon at all periods of great change. The great ones began the change out of inner necessity. The little ones, thinking that they must carry on the process, have got stuck in eccentricity because they do not have the firm ground of inner necessity under their feet. But I was glad to see it. At least my opinion has become stabilized and clear . . . I was particularly glad about two things: first, to see fine works by American artists whom I know personally, and secondly to note the unanimity among all artists, critics and the public that the eccentrics are not even worth laughing at . . .

When the exhibition closed, after being seen by a quarter of a million people, the organizers, flushed with victory, marched up and down the main hall to the strains of fifes and drums. The Armoury Show represented the last, final defeat not only of academicism, but also of Art Nouveau. 'Don't cheer, boys,' John Quinn quoted the words of Captain Philip, when he sunk a Spanish ship at Santiago, 'the poor devils are dying.'

The following month, Mucha wound up his remaining affairs in America and prepared to leave the country. 'I shall take the portrait of the Archbishop,' he wrote to Maruška on 19 February, 'if I don't sell it in New York. I would let it go cheap, but not under two thousand. I'd rather take it home.'

The days of Atlantis were numbered. Adolph Zukor, an ex-furrier, showed the first long feature film in four parts

at the Lyceum Theatre: *Queen Elizabeth* with Sarah Bernhardt in the main role, and George Kleine presented *Quo Vadis* at the Astor Theatre. Another furrier, Marcus Loew, who had converted the former German Theatre on 59th Street and Madison Avenue into Loew's Plaza, founded the first circuit of New York cinemas and was well on his way to becoming the all-powerful master of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

Nikola, the King of Montenegro and its 300,000 inhabitants, declared war on Turkey; Captain Scott perished in the Antarctic; King George of the Hellenes was assassinated, and Mrs Potter Palmer returned from Osprey Point to Chicago. 'Mrs Palmer's plans are indefinite,' her secretary informed the Press. 'She will do no entertaining and spend her time in rest preparatory to a trip abroad.'

The same issue of the *Chicago Examiner*, dated 24 February 1913, printed a three-column article, headed: 'Alphonse Mucha, World-Famous Artist, Here to Put Happiness in Mrs Leatherbee's Portrait.' At the end of the third section, in the second column, there is a paragraph of a few lines: 'The artist threw . . . an interesting sidelight on the . . . situation . . . declaring that within six months there will be a general war embroiling all the powers of Europe, with England and Germany locked in a death struggle for supremacy.' This was not even given an extra headline.

The last letter is dated: 'On board S.S. *Aquitania*, 15 March 1913.'

> I have been working hard throughout the voyage. It's a big job and so I don't want to lose a single minute. Before I left, a representative from a film company came to tell me that they wanted to make a big film of my 'Lord's Prayer'. It's to be the biggest thing they've done and will be sold all over the world.

I'm now working at the script so that I can send it to them immediately we arrive at Cherbourg . . .

But the shores of Atlantis, from which he set sail with his bearskins, Chinese hangings, chasubles, stuffed birds and incense, had by now disappeared for ever.

Bibliography

BOOKS:

Čadík, Jindřich. *A. Mucha—život a dílo.* Manuscript.

Aragon, Louis. *Les Cloches de Bâle.* Illustré par A. Mucha—préface. Œuvres croisées d'Aragon et Elsa Troilet. Robert Lafont, Paris, 1965.

Basika, Karel. 40 *let čs. známky.* Bibliophilie, Praha, 1958.

Alphons Mucha. Filatelie, Praha, 1958.

Carline, R. *Pictures in the Post.* Pl. ix, pp. 34. London, Bedford, 1959.

Curinier, C. E. *Dictionnaire national des contemporains.* Vol. 3. Office général d'éditions, de librairie et d'imprimerie, Paris, 1906.

Graul, R. *Die Krisis im Kunstgewerbe.* R. G., Leipzig, 1901.

Guerrand, R. H. *L'Art Nouveau en Europe.* Plon, Paris, 1965.

Hladík, Václav. *O současné Francii.* J. Otto, Praha, 1907.

Jelínek, Hanuš. *Zahučely lesy.* F. Borový, Praha, 1947.

Jiřík, F. X. *Vývoj malířství českého v XIX. století,* Jednota výtvarných Umělců, Praha, 1909.

Koch, Robert. *Louis C. Tiffany, rebel in glass.* Crown Publishers Inc., New York, 1965.

Larkin, W. Oliver. *Art and Life in America,* rev. ed. Holt, Reinhart & Winston, New York, 1960.

Marx, Roger. *Les maîtres de l'affiche.* 5 vols. Imprimerie Chaix, Paris, 1896–1900.

Mascha, O. *Österreichische Plakatkunst.* J. Löwy, Wien, 1915.

Mucha, Alphonse. *Documents décoratifs,* préface par Gabriel Mourey. Librairie Centrale des Beaux Arts, Paris, 1902.

Mucha, Jiří. *Alphonse Mucha, the master of the Art Nouveau.* Artia, Prague, 1966.

Ottův naučný slovník: XVII. J. Otto, Praha, 1901.

Polívka, Eduard. *K historii vzniku první československé tisícikoruny.* Čsl. numismatická společnost, Praha, 1964.

Reade, Brian. *Art Nouveau and Alphonse Mucha.* 2nd ed. H.M.S.O., London, 1963.

Rheims, Maurice. *L'Objet* 1900. Arts et Métiers Graphiques. Paris, 1964.

L'Art 1900. Arts et Métiers Graphiques, Paris, 1965.

Sponsel, J. L. *Das moderne Plakat.* pp. 100–104. Gerhard Kühtmann, Dresden, 1897.

Thieme, Ulrich und Becker, Felix. *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler XXV.* E. A. Seemann, Leipzig, 1931.

Wecter, Dixon. *The Saga of American Society.* Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1937.

Wember, Paul. *Die Jugend der Plakate* 1887–1917. p. 73. Krefeld no. 611, n.d.
Zur Westen, Walter von. *Reklamekunst*. Velhagen und Klasing, Bielefeld und Leipzig, 1903.

PERIODICALS:

Art et Décoration 1: 33, 1905.
The Artist 30: 113–119, 1931.
The Brooklyn Museum Quarterly, 1921, pp. 57–61.
Connaissance des Arts: 'Un second bronze de Mucha est retrouvé.' no. 155, p. 11, Jan. 1965.
Ethische Kultur 10: 50, 1902.
Helbings Monatsberater über Kunstwissenschaft 2: 97–100, 1902.
Kunst und Kunsthandwerk 3: 304, 1900.
Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Vervielfältigung der Kunst, 1897, 1898.
La Plume—special number 'Mucha et son œuvre.' La Plume, Paris, 1897.
The Studio 90: 38–41, 1925.
Volné Směry. 'The Alphonse Mucha Exhibition.' *Volné Směry*, Jan. 1898, column 128.
Amaya, Mario. 'Mucha's fantasy.' *Apollo* 77: 475–477, 1963.
Banham, Reyner. 'The first master of the mass media?' *The Listener* 69: 1080, 1963.
Bauer, G. 'Two magicians of the hoardings.' *L'Echo de Paris*, June 4th, 1936.
Brinton, Christian. 'Midsummer in Bohemia.' *Appleton's Magazine*, August 1906.
Byrns, Arthur. G. 'The Art or Alphonse Mucha.' *Smith's Magazine*, 1907.
Champier, Victor. 'L'exposition de A. Mucha à la Bodinière.' *Revue des Arts Décoratifs* 17: 58–60, 1897.
Classens, Henri. 'Le modern style.' *Jardin des Arts* no. 114, pp. 34–47, 1964.
Hayden-Clarendon, J. 'Mucha.' *New York Daily News*, April 3rd, 1904.
Hilbert, J. *Zlatá Praha* 15: 48, 1898.
Hladík, V. *Zlatá Praha* 17: 577, 1900.
Holme, Charles. 'Modern designs in jewellery and fans.' *The Studio*, special Winter number, 1902.
Horica, I. *Zlatá Praha* 17: 586, 1900.
Masson, C. *Zlatá Praha* 17: 539, 1900.
Melville, Robert. 'Le Style Mucha is fashion.' *Ambassador*, 1963, pp. 89–93.
Mucha, Jiří. 'The world of Mucha.' *The London Magazine* 3: 43–52, 1963.
Shelton-Williams, P. M. T. 'L'Art Nouveau and Alphonse Mucha.' *Contemporary Review* 203: 265–270; 316–320, 1963.
Sylvester, David. 'Sarah's signwriter.' *The Sunday Times Colour Magazine*, 19th May, 1963.

CATALOGUES:

Galerie de la Bodinière, L'Exposition des Œuvres du peintre Alphonse Mucha, Paris 1897.
Salon des Cent, L'Exposition des Œuvres de Mucha, Paris, 1897.
Ausstellung Alfons Mucha, Kunstsalon Artaria Wien, Nov. 1897.
Brooklyn Museum, The Slav Epopee, introduction by Christian Brinton, New York, 1921.
Klementinum, Slovanská Epopej, Praha, 1919.
Alfons Mucha, Slovanská Epopej, Veletržní palác, Praha, 1928.
Souborná výstava Alfonse Muchy, Hradec Králové, 1933.
Souborná výstava Alfonse Muchy, Brno, 1933.
Musée du Jeu de Paume, Exposition Mucha et Kupka, préface par Gaston Poulain, Paris, 1936.
Municipal Museum Arnhem, Boyman's Museum Rotterdam, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 1959, Citroën Collection, cat. no. 12.
Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne 1960–61, Les sources du XX^{e} siècle, cat. no. 1131.
London, Goldsmith's Hall, 1961, International Exhibition of Jewellery 1890–1961, cat. no. 585.
Paris, Musée du Louvre 1962, Dix siècles de joaillerie française, cat. no. 149.
Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum 1962–63, Citroën Collection, cat. no. 100.
Grosvenor and Arthur Jeffers Gallery, Mucha and Art Nouveau, Introduction by James Laver, London, 1963.
Bibliothèque Forney, Affiches 1900, préface par R. H. Guerrand, Paris, 1963.
Slaný, Kulturní dům, Alfons Mucha, úvod Yaroslav Mervart, 1963.
Profesor Jaromír Pečírka, Katalog k výstavě v Ústí nad Orlicí, 1965.
Hotel Solvay, Bijoux 1900, Bruxelles, 1965.
Bibliothèque Forney, Exposition Mucha, R. H. Guerrand, Andrée David, préface par Aragon, Paris, 1966.
Ústí nad Labem, Dům Kultury, Alfons Mucha, úvod Yaroslav Mervart, 1966.
Galleria del Levante, Milano, Alphonse Mucha, introduction Maurice Rheims, 1966.

Index

Abbéma, Louis, 138, 182, 220
Adam, Paul, 215
Adams, Maud, 341, 342, 343
Adams (pupil of Whistler), 200
Adler (agent), 323, 324, 327
Aleš, 279
Alexander I, King of Serbia, 260
Angelico, Fra, 108
Anna la Javannaise, 122, 123
Antoine (impresario), 156
Arène, Em., 275
Arlberg, Fritz, 154
Artois, Armand d', 180
Asquith, Lady, 182
Astor family, 291, 392
Atché (artist), 244
Atché y Fané, 244

Balcarová, Žofka, 14
Barnum, P. T., 360, 372
Barrès, Maurice, 110
Barrie, J. M., 342
Barrymore, Ethel, 343, 344
Barrymore, Maurice, 343
Basonpier, Count, 283
Bauer, Henri, 138, 156, 181
Baumfeld, Dr, 334
Beardsley, Aubrey, 148
Beerbohm, Max, 343
Beers, Jan van, 249, 283
Belasco, David, 142, 337, 341
Belmont family, 284
Benoît-Levy (lawyer), 217
Béranger (senator), 118
Béranger (song-writer), 260
Berger (Khuen's manager), 35, 79, 80
Bergès, 305
Berlioz, Hector, 275
Bernard, Tristan, 162, 361
Bernhardt, Maurice, 137
Bernhardt, Sarah, needs poster urgently, 127; in *Gismonda*, 127, 129; takes Sardou as her lover, 129; *Fédora* written for, 129; rivals Fanny Davenport, 129; takes up M., 131 *et seq.*; described by M., 134–40; described by Rostand, 137; and her Company, 141–2; uses Wilde as confidant, 142–3; aphorisms of, 143; professionalism of, 143, 144; and other actors, 144; and the *Gismonda* poster, 145–6; and Strindberg in 1883, 156; 'trademark' of, 167; and *Joan of Arc* poster, 167; on 5th US tour, 170; returns to Paris, 180; dinner in honour of, 181; 'Hymn to S. B.', 181; returns from 6th US tour, 194; and a failure, 194, 195; opens Châtelet Theatre, 195, 220; letter from, after death, 210, 211; 1st season of, at Châtelet, 220, 221; and male roles, 221; M.'s work for, exhibited, 230; makes 7th tour of US, 242; luggage of, 243; writes to Wilde, 243; arthritic wrist of, 246; hands of, as models, 248; reunited with M. in New York, 324, 325; Leslie Carter as rival to, 338; and her leg, 360; continues acting, 361; M. visits, in Paris, 362; in film of *Queen Elizabeth*, 374; buried near Wilde, 243
Berthelot, Philip, 110
Berton, Pierre, 142
Besnard (artist), 158, 220
'Bibi la Purée', 109, 110, 115
Bílek (sculptor), 109
Bing, 217, 246, 286, 287
Bismarck, 11, 47
Björnsen, Björn, 157
Blitz, Henri, 334
Boček (student), 19
Bonnard (painter), 55, 66, 70
Bonnemain, Mme de, 62, 120
Bonnier, Louis, 217
Bosch, Hieronymus, 174, 187
Bouguereau (painter), 54, 285, 331
Boulanger, General, 62, 64, 120, 121
Boulanger, Gustave, 65, 247
Bourdelle, 362
Bourrelier I (lithographer), 83
Bourrelier II, Henri, 83, 84, 149, 150, 191, 249, 362
Bourrelier III, Michel, 83, 192
Boussard, Mme (M.'s concierge), 265

Bradley (artist), 286
Bradley, Harold C., 352
Bradley, Mrs Josephine Crane, 352
Brady, 'Diamond Jim', 315
Brandès, Mme (actress), 182
Brangwyn, 287
Brill, A. A., 370
Brožík, 59, 60, 234, 253, 263, 277
Bruant, Aristide, 133
Bruckner, Anton, 271
Brunoff, I, de, 126, 127, 129, 130
Brunoff, II, de, 126
Buécourt, Mlle (later Mme Sardou), 128
Bufon, Mme de, 249
Buisset (painter), 361
Bunker, Mrs, 327
Burne-Jones, Edward, 100

Callot, 12
Candiani, R., 247
'Canon, Hans', *see* Straširybka
Canqueteau (poet), 172
Capucine, 275
Carnot, President, 120, 157
Caron, Widow, *see* Charlotte, Mme
Carpenter, Mrs, 292
Carrière, 111
Carter, Leslie, 336–41, 353
Caruso, Enrico, 327, 372
Caserio (assassin), 120, 157, 159
Cassan Fils (printers), 174
Cazalis, Henri, 213
Cézanne, 68
Champenois (printer), 146, 170, 171, 172, 186, 245, 249, 262, 282, 290, 299, 302, 362, 363
Chaplin, Charles, 144
Charlotte, Mme, 88, 89, 90, 98, 154, 163, 175, 176, 177
Charpentier (composer), 58, 182, 215
Chartres, Duke of, 218
Chavannes, Puvis de, 65, 102, 103, 126, 167, 361, 372
Chavette (writer), 110
Chéradam, 214, 250
Chéret (poster artist), 132, 133, 168, 217, 218, 248
Chevalier, Maurice, 30
Chincholle, 250
Chytil, Dr Karel, 272, 273, 329
Chytilová, Emilia, 267, 321, 322, 329, 331, 333, 356
Chytilová, Maruška, 192; misses sight of Rodin, 255; asks her uncle for help, 263–4; receives invitation from M., 264; visits M., 264, 265; account of visit by, 265, 266, 267; visits M. often, 267; background of, 271, 272, 273; returns to Bohemia, 274; corresponds with M., 277, 280; hears M. is going to US, 281; awaits his return, 299; unofficially engaged to M., 300; engagement ring of, 300; writes to Baroness Rothschild, 303; implores M. to return from US, 320; advises M. over finances, 322–3; describes trousseau, 329; marries M. on June 10, 1906, 328; *now see under* Mucha, Maruška
Clairin, Georges, 138, 182, 210, 211, 220, 242, 244, 362
Claretie, 215
Clark, Mrs, 327
Clémenceau, 129, 158, 179
Cogniet, 65
Colarossi, 117, 195, 249
Colin, Armand, 83, 84, 108, 113, 150, 248
Colonne, Eduard (musician), 181
Constable, John, 104
Coppé, 181, 259
Coquelin (actor), 141, 144, 195
Cortissoz (art critic), 372
Courmes, D. A., 96
Crane, Charles R., 333, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353
Crane, Frances, 350
Crane, Richard, 350
Crane, Walter, 148, 286
Craven, Lord, 308
Curie, Mme, 235

Dali, Salvador, 121, 174
Daudet, Alphonse, 158, 182
Davies, Arthur B., 371
Dědina (artist), 109, 115
Degas, 66, 69
Degron, Henri, 185, 186
Déjazet, Mlle, 128
Delacroix, 12, 104
Delius, Frederick, 93, 162, 175
Deneen, Mrs Charles S., 292
Denis, Maurice, 65, 66, 70, 175
Denslow, W. W., 286
Derain, André, 372
Déroulède, 180, 217, 222
Deschamps, Léon, 172
Desiderius, Father, *see* Lenz, Didier
Desossé, V. le, 75
Destinn, Emmy, 298
Detaille (painter), 249, 362
Deuel, Judge, 313
Deutsch (industrialist), 228, 229
Deval (actor), 141

Diaghilev, Serge, 349
Dodge, Mrs Mabel, 370
Dolina, 16
Donnay, Maurice, 170
Doré, Gustav, 49
Dosset (Mayor of Paris), 179, 249, 256
Doucer, Jerôme, 132
Drew, John, 342, 343
Drexel, Anthony J., 314
Dreyfus, 179, 217, 218, 222
Duberry (actor), 194, 250
Duchamps, Marcel, 372
Dudley, Caroline Louise, *see* Carter, Leslie
Dumas *fils*, 158, 180
Dupuy (Minister), 119
Durand-Ruel, 122
Durrio (jewel-maker), 92, 93, 175
Duse, Eleonora, 195
Dvořák, Anton, 279, 297, 333

Egon, Count, 39, 40, 41, 49
Eisenstein, 114
Elizabeth of Bavaria, 29
Ende, Hans am (painter), 278
Exner, Herr Hofrat, 231, 232, 258

Fairbanks, N. K., 337
Fargue, John le, 285
Farley, Archbishop, 298, 315, 318
Favre, Dr, 236, 237, 249
Ferdinand of Bulgaria, King, 365
Ferkel, Mme de (medium), 201, 204
Feur, De (designer), 126
Feydeau (playwright), 182
Fiedler, Arthur (conductor), 325
Filiger (painter), 101
Fish, Mrs Stuyvesant, 313, 314
Flammarion, Camille (astronomer), 202, 203, 204, 205, 213
Flers, de (writer), 169, 173
Flynn, Elisabeth Gurley, 370
Fouquet, Alphonse, 136, 245
Fouquet, Georges, 245, 246, 249, 262
Fouquier, Henri, 157
France, Anatole, 215, 218
Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria, 28, 29, 30–1, 38, 77, 78, 271
Frederika, Empress of Prussia, 243
Freund-Deschamps, 209, 249, 301
Friedberg, Field Marshal Baron, 11, 271, 272
Fries (friend of M.), 249
Friml, Rudolf, 298
Frohman, Charles, 342, 344
Futterer, *see* Charlotte, Mme

Gagneur, Mme (actress), 249
Gallé (artist), 149, 213
Gallmeyer, Pepi, 30
Gallus, Hugo, 35
Gambetta, 202
Garbo, Greta, 144
Gaudi (artist), 148, 220
Gauguin, 65, 66, 93, 124, 167, 175, 372; at Pont Aven, 68–9; on Impressionists, 95–6; arrives at the crémerie, 98; as raconteur, 98; disliked, 100–1; associates of, 101; character of, 102; with de Chavannes and M., 103; sells 30 pictures, 104; goes to Tahiti, returns, 104; shares studio with M., 105; borrows from Mme Charlotte, 105–6; moves away, 106; sits as model for M., 109; dress of, with M., 117; claims Inca descent, 123; accepts Anna, 122, 123; receives leg-wound, 123; and Strindberg, 154, 162; robbed by Anna, 123, 162; last letter of, 162–3; macabre death of, 163; '2 Tahiti Women' of, 177; wood engravings by, 177
Gautier, Judith, 150
Geistinger, 30
George of the Hellenes, King, 374
Géricault, 12
Gibson, Archer, 332
Gibson, Charles D., 286
Gilette (playwright), 194
Ginisty (editor), 91, 156, 165, 215, 249
Girardi, 30
Goethe, 210, 211
Gogh, Vincent van, 372
Goncourt (playwright), 156
Gordon, General, 40
Gottlieb (stage electrician), 342
Gottlob (designer), 126
Gould family, 282, 291, 351
Gould, George, 314
Gould, Mrs George J., 291
Gould, J., 291
Gould, Marjorie, 314
Goulue, La, 75, 82, 119, 121, 122
Goya, 12
Graham, Captain Harry, 343
Granier, Jeanne, 170
Grasset (artist), 132, 149, 167, 213, 246, 248, 286, 287
Grévin, President of France, 62
Gros (painter), 12
Groš, Lord Mayor of Prague, 358
Gudden, Professor von, 47, 48
Guerrand, Roger H., 148
Guimard, 148, 215, 217, 218, 237, 369
Guitry, Lucien, 138, 141, 170, 249

Haan, Meij de, 98, 99
Habrda, Police Inspector, 78
Hahn, Reynaldo, 138, 182, 215, 242
Hamsun, Knut, 158
Hanslick (critic), 271
Haraucourt, 215
Hartley, Marsden, 370
Hauslab, General, 39
Haussmann, Baron, 50
Havemayer family, 333, 351
Hayden-Clarendon, J., 188, 199
Haywood, 'Big Bill', 370
Hazenplug, Frank, 286
Hermant, Abel (pacifist writer), 218
Herterich, 41
Hertz (architect), 334, 363
Heuzé, 121
Hladík (foreign correspondent), 213, 214, 216, 260, 261, 263, 301, 356
Hlava, Professor, 261
Holtger (sculptor), 177
Horta (painter), 148, 213, 215, 217, 369
Houbigant, 234, 245
Hoyos, Count, 77
Hubermann (violinist), 276
Hugo, Victor, 128, 202
Hyde, James Hazen, 307–13
Hynais (painter), 59, 60, 234

Ibela (painter), 55, 287
Ibn Saud, King, 351
Ibsen, Henrik, 156, 157
Irving, Henry, 144
Irving, Laurence, 343
Isabel of Brazil, Princess, 229

Janáček, Leoš, 16, 17, 187
Jaurès, 218, 259
Jesenská, Růžena (poetess), 206, 263, 274
John II of Liechtenstein, Prince, 38
Joseph II, Emperor of Austria, 13–14
Jourdain, Frantz (architect), 217
Jouvet (publisher), 92, 249
Jouvet, Louis (actor), 144

Kadar (friend of M.), 91, 113, 125
Kafka, Franz, 24
Kautsky-Brioschi-Burghardt, 27, 33, 38
Kemal Ataturk, 350
Khuen, Count, 35–9, 71, 79, 80
Kiskadden, Mary (actress), 342
Kleine, George, 374
Kobler (art dealer), 330
Koch, Robert, 288
Kocián (violinist), 298
Kornilov, 349
Korolenko, 349
Kosa (pupil of M.), 334
Kotěra, 275
Kovařík (violinist), 297
Krämer (painter), 87–8, 127
Kray, Professor, 41
Křížkovský, Father, 15, 16
Kubelík, Jan (violinist), 298
Kubr, Mrs, *see* Mucha, Anna
Kuhn, Walter, 371
Kulda, B. M., 3, 4
Kupka (painter), 109, 215

Lahor, Jean, *see* Cazalis, Henri
Lalande, Berthe de, 190, 191, 192, 193
Lalique, 182, 213, 242, 362
Latif (Bosnian servant), 232
Laurens, Jean-Paul, 65, 84, 215, 264–5, 361
Lautrec, *see* Toulouse-Lautrec
Lavaux, de, 91
Leatherbee, Frances, 350, 352, 353, 357, 359, 363, 374
Lefebvre, J. J., 64–5, 247
Le Foyer, 250
Legrand, 249
Lehr, Harry (stunt man), 313
Lemercier (printer), 126, 130, 145, 146, 170
Lemoine (engraver), 114
Lenz, Didier, 99
Leo XIII, Pope, 78
Leoncavallo, Ruggiero, 142
Lepage, B., 65
Leslie, Frank, 286
Lévy, Emile (printer & publisher), 82, 128, 249, 261, 262, 299, 302, 305
Lhota, Professor, 24
Lina, Mlle (medium), 203
Lindbergh (baby), 121
Loew, Marcus, 336, 374
Löfftz, 41
Loliée, Frédéric, 249
Long, John Luther (dramatist), 338, 341
Loos, Adolf, 369–70
Loridan, 250
Lorilleux, Messrs, 108, 113, 230, 249
Lorrain, Jean, 138
Loti, Pierre, 182
Louise (M.'s cook), 178, 191, 193, 282, 330
Louÿs, Pierre, 110
Luccheni, 29
Ludwig II of Bavaria, King, 42–8
Lugné-Poë, 157
Luguet, Marcel, 249

Luitpold of Bavaria, Prince, 48
Lumière Bros., 223, 224
Lyautey, Marshal, 179

Machuron, M. (aero engineer), 225, 226
Mackay, Mrs, 291
McKay, Mrs, 317, 353
McKinley, President, 243
Mackensen (painter), 278
Maeterlinck, Maurice, 68, 69
Mahler, Gustav, 298
Makart, Hans, 31, 49, 84, 108
Makovský (painter), 91
Makovský (restaurateur), 127
Malá, Amalia, *see* Mucha, Amalia
Mallarmé, Stéphane, 112, 158
Manchester, Duke of, 343
Mánes (painter), 272
Mann, Colonel W. d'A., 312, 313
Mansard (architect), 178
Manuel, Eugen (poet), 128
Mařák, 298
Marburg, Elisabeth, 370
Marcus family, 263, 264, 265, 268
Marmier, Xavier, 92
Marold, Luděk, 85, 109, 115, 116, 193, 253
Marsac, Vicomte de, 180
Marshall-Field, Mrs, 292
Marthold, Mme (actress), 141
Martin, Mr & Mrs Bradley, 307, 308, 311
Martin, Cornelia Bradley, 308
Maruška, *see* Chytilová *then* Mucha
Masaryk, Jan, 80, 350
Masaryk, T. G., 349, 351, 354
Mašek, K. V., 52–3, 55, 59, 173
Matisse, 372
Mauclaire, Camille, 93
Maurier, Gerald du, 343
Maurras, 110, 158
Maus (painter), 215
Max II of Bavaria, King, 29
Max, de (actor), 141
Mehoffer, 91
Mendès, Catulle, 138, 158, 181, 182
Meritt, Mrs, 319, 327
Mérode, Cléo de, 190
Michaud, Père, 87
Mirbeau, Octave, 158, 222
Modersohn (painter), 278
Molière, 266
Mollard, Ida, 154
Moltke, General von, 11
Monaco, Princess of, 182
Montesquiou, Robert de, 182, 189, 361
Morand, 242
Moréas, Jean, 68, 94, 110
Moreau, Emile, 129
Morgan family, 263, 284, 312, 327
Morgan, Mrs, 291
Morice, Charles, 111
Morière, Mme, 90
Morris, William (painter, politician), 3, 68, 93, 212, 214, 257, 285
Morris, William (showman), 335, 336
Moser, Herr, 231
Mounet-Sully, 144
Mrštík, Alois, 19
Mrštík, Vilém, 19
Mucha, earliest (1488), 1
Mucha, Great-Grandfather, 1–2
Mucha, Aloisia, 14, 15, 48
MUCHA, ALPHONSE MARIA: Artist babyhood, 6–7; lefthandedness, 7; vandal art, 7; as alto and violinist, 7; violin lessons of, 7–8; two early lives of, 8; as an acolyte, 9–10; later reticence of, 9; puts arts and religion together, 9; studio of, 30 years later, 10; experience of, in Church, 10–11; in Austro-Prussian War, 11–12; observation of, 13; as cake decorator, 13; and the Fiesta, 14–15; goes for audition, 15; meets Janáček, 16; joins Brno Choir, 16; life of, as chorister, 16; designs frontispiece, 17; describes St Peter's Bells, 17; describes Christmas Day Mass, 18; leaves the Church, 18; in Panenská St., Brno; 18, 19; sees Umlauf's work in Ústí, 20; decides to become a painter, 20; method of, with letters, 21; becomes a clerk, 21; and amateur theatricals, 21, 22; and useless societies, 22; takes drawing lessons, 22, 23; in Prague, 23; sees Vollberger, 24; rejected by Academy, 24; as vagrant in Prague, 24, 25, 26; returns home, 26; leaves clerk's post, 26; goes to Vienna 1879, 27; and Makart's influence, 32–3; leaves Vienna, 33; goes to Mikulov, 33–4; earns from drawings, 34; and the torn trousers, 34–5; receives commission from Count Khuen, 37; moves into Emmahof, 37; is sent to Gandegg, 39; proves a poor sportsman, 39–40; is sent to study in Munich, 41; finds friends and work, 46; embarrassments, 47; finds his family changed, 48;

MUCHA, ALPHONSE MARIA—*cont.*:
resumes frescoes at Emmahof, 49; Egon sends, to Paris, 49; arrives at Gare de l'Est, 51; settles in Impasse Mazagran, 53; and superstitions, 53; sees real poverty, 54; and solidarity of émigré Czechs, 55; and his first impressions of Paris, 55; writes Christmas letter, 59; and his friends, 60; and his 1st year's programme, 60–1; and Widhopf's shirt, 64, 117; starts to become less provincial, 67–8; widens his reading, 68; writes Easter letter 70; and absence of love affairs, 70; returns to Emmahof in holidays, 71; returns to Paris, 71; at rue Bara, 72; and his recreations, 75, 76; busily sketching, 75–6; enters at Colarossi, 76; has allowance withdrawn, 79; capacity of, for confusion, 80–1; suffers deprivation again, 81; visited by Bourrelier, 83; finds sketchbooks useful, 84; illustrating commission, 84; is joined by Marold, 85–6; and friends Vácha and Krämer, 87–8; moves to Mme Charlotte's crémerie, 88–9; describes the crémerie, 89–90; paints panel for crémerie, 91, 177; does cover designs, 91–2; rushes *Adamité* drawings, 92; gets Mention at the Salon, 92; his mind becomes shaped, 93; and germ of Art Nouveau, 93–4; and Symbolism, 96; influenced by Verkade, 100; aware of Gauguin's genius, 101; disapproves of Gauguin as a man, 102; influenced by Japanese art, 103; develops his style, 104; lets Gauguin share his studio, 105; moves to opposite the crémerie, 106; buys a harmonium, 106; takes up photography, 107; describes use of the camera, 107; on the way to success (1892), 108, 113; and his sources of income, 108–9; the thought behind work of, 108–9; and portrait of Verlaine, 110; later cautiousness about Verlaine, 111; and Carrière, 111; and the German History, 114, 115, 124; uses friends as models, 115; and Ženíšek, 115, 116; starts giving classes, 117; makes his classes popular, 117, 195; appearance and dress of, 117; organizes Bal des Quat'z Arts, 118; dresses up as General Boulanger, 120, 121; and La Goulue in 1928, 122; and Anna la Javannaise, 123; delays return home, 124; studio of, described, 124, 125; at Lemercier's on Christmas Day, 126–7; is asked to design poster for Sarah Bernhardt, 127; sketches Bernhardt from the wings, 127–8; and Sardou, 128; and first drawing of Bernhardt, 129; draws full sketch on table-top, 130; pleases Bernhardt, 130; has apprehensions, 130–1; Bernhardt and de Brunoff employ, 131; approved of by the Press, 132; has his past exaggerated, 132–3; continues with success of the poster, 133; designs sets and costumes for Bernhardt, 133; describes Bernhardt, 134–40; paid little for *Gismonda* poster, 146; works on next play, 146–7; coproduces with Bernhardt, 147; designs programme instead of poster, 147; 'I did it my own way', 147; avoids international contacts, 148; expresses his attitude to Art, 149; expresses his style (in 1895), 149–50; and Ruty's devotion, 150–151; describes Strindberg, 152, 154–5; puts up Strindberg, 154–5; with Strindberg in occultism, 155, 159; uses his studio for experiments, 161; portrayed in Strindberg play, 163; contrasted with Grasset, 167–168; and *La Princesse Lointaine*, 168–9, 170, 173, 174; and poster for *Les Amants*, 170; works for Champenois, 170, 171; and his contract with Champenois, 171; shows bad business sense, 171; obligations of, 171–2; studio of, described, 172; described (1895), 172; moves to new studio at Val de Grâce, 175; later (1921) receives letter from Mme Charlotte, 175–7; and his new studio described, 178; takes up sculpture with Seysses, 179; enters political society, 179; joins Dreyfusards, 179, 180; works again with Bernhardt, 180; makes successful new poster for *Lorenzaccio*, 180; at Bernhardt's party, 181–2; holds two exhibitions, 182, 183; has 100-page supplement in *La Plume*, 183; has full support from Bernhardt, 183; achieves enormous success, 184; remains confused over national obligations, 184, 185; and his mistrust of

women, 185; and his programme at the Val de Grâce, 188, 189; makes studio an artistic centre, 189; and Berthe de Lalande, 190–3; designs 5th & 6th Bernhardt posters, 194; in 1898: work in hand, 195; and booming classes, 195; joins forces with Whistler, 196; and his side of the Académie Carmen, 198; accepts Whistler's criticisms, 199; has affinities with Whistler, 199, 200; meets Col. de Rochas, 201; plunges into the occult, 203; and automatic writing, 205, 277, 278; and 'The Lord's Prayer', 207, 231, 275, 296, 298, 327, 330, 374–5; receives letters from the dead, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211; between occultism and Art Social, 213; does poster for 'Société Populaire', 218; illustrates Anatole France's *Cléo*, 218; and Bernhardt's new theatre, 220, 221; goes to Spain, 220; encounters Moorish Iberian culture, 220; produces poster in Madrid, 220; takes to scientific subjects, 223, 246, 247; meets Lumière Bros., 223; makes collection for World Fair, 230; becomes sought after, 230; asked to decorate a whole pavilion, 231; works on this, 232, 233, 234; swears to work for the Nation, 233; yields 'le style Mucha', 233–4; makes Houbigant statue, 234; works immensely hard, 234; designs poster for *L'Aiglon*, 242; is identified with Art Nouveau, 243; and promotion to 'genre Mucha', 244; through sculpture meets Rodin, 245; designs Boutique Fouquet, 246; work of, appraised by Candiani, 247–9; uses Bernhardt's hands for models, 248; gives large dinner party, 249; and guests at it, 249–50; comments on own works, 251; is criticized by one paper, 251; and his overgenerosity, 251–2; is hopeless with money, 251, 252; is uncertain about himself, 252; finds his friends are dying off, 253; visits Prague with Rodin, 253, 254; visits Úprka with Rodin, 255; gives views on Art and teaching, 255–7; makes out report on Schools, 256–8; on Art in Prague, 258, 259; and the skulls, 261; and pressure of work, 261–2; tries to leave Paris, 262; Jerusalem murals planned, 262, 301; and Baroness de Rothschild, 262; anxious to acquire money, 263; considers visit to USA, 263; contemplates marriage, 263; and Jesenská, 206, 263; agrees to see Maruška, 264; and her visit, 266, 267; relates the incident, 267; described by Mařuska, 268; corresponds after an incident, 269–70; suggests she moves nearer him, 267; becomes her teacher, 267; draws her head, 267; takes her to the theatre, 268; writes afterwards, 273; gives advice to her, 273–4; is left alone again, 274; rumours and scandal about, 274; corresponds regularly with Maruška, 274, 275, 276, 280, 287; speeds up his work, 276; doubts his Czech direction, 276, 277; and Czech Nationalist Movement, 279, 280; departs for America, 281, 282, 283; stops smoking, 282; is welcomed in New York, 286, 288–9; visits Tiffany, 287, 288; is banqueted, 289; does not enjoy the pace, 290; wishes to paint portraits, 290, 291; becomes socially enmeshed, 291, 297; progresses through American society, 291, 292, 293; on American women, 292, 293; and the 'Mucha Woman', 292, 293; designs dresses, 293; on American painters, 294; approaches artistic crisis, 295; interviewed by Press, 295, 296, 297; and the Archbishop's portrait, 298, 299, 318, 373; sums up his US tour, 299; returns to Paris, 299; visits Maruška's family, 300; and his travel arrangements, 300; becomes unofficially engaged, 300; designs ring for Maruška, 300; conceives 'Madonna of the Lilies', 301; works at Freund-Deschamps, 301; is opposed by Baroness Rothschild, 303; spends Christmas (1904) alone, 305–6; returns to New York, 309; is commissioned by Hazen Hyde, 308, 309; paints Réjane, 309, 310; describes Hazen Hyde's ball, 311; is socially very acceptable, 315; turns down commissions, 315; dislikes social round, 315; and his artist friends in New York, 316; is easily duped, 316, 317; realizes uselessness of US visit, 317; describes Archbishop and Madonna

MUCHA, ALPHONSE MARIA—*cont.*: paintings, 318; visits President Roosevelt, 319, 320; sends him his views on US Art, 320; starts Cours Mucha in New York, 320; stays with Roosevelts, 321; suggests to Maruška that they marry in New York, 321; temporizes over marriage, 322; gives exhibition in New York, 323, 324; is well received, 325; later confesses to struggle, 326; gives more exhibitions, 327; makes soap designs, lectures, 327, 328; has subconscious horror of marriage, 328; has wedding plans made public, 328; is married on 10 June 1906 in Prague, 328; transfers whole Paris studio to New York, 330; is greatly helped by Maruška, 330, 331; and the German Theatre, 334, 335; and Leslie Carter, 338–9, 340; and failure of *Kassa*, 341; and *Maid of Orleans* designs, 342, 343; and portrait of Maud Adams, 343; now has entrée to American stage, 343; paints Ethel Barrymore, 343, 344; compromises over work, 344; as successful teacher of Art, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348; makes another rash decision, 348; meets Charles R. Crane, 351; draws Crane's daughter as 'Slavia', 352; paints Frances Leatherbee, 353; discloses National plan to Crane, 353; asks Crane for financial support, 353–4; unbounded optimism of, 354; sends Maruška home in advance, 354; prepares to design Prague Municipal Building, 355; arouses uproar in Prague, 356–9; is out of touch with Prague, 356–8; stays with Leatherbees, 359; receives Crane's support, 359; commutes between New York and Paris, 361; visits Rodin, 361, 363; visits Buisset, 361; sees many old friends, 362; sees Champenois, 362, 363; undertakes study tours in Slav countries, 363; and his bad photography, 364; describes visit to King of Montenegro, 364, 365; is fascinated by Russia, 366–7; is taken to task by Maruška, 367; and a survey of his mistakes, 368–9; at the Modernist Exhibition, 373; and Art Nouveau are defeated, 373; leaves America, 373; forecasts First World War a year too early, 374; works on film script of 'Lord's Prayer', 374–5

MUCHA, ALPHONSE MARIA, Works of:

Books, illustrated: Adamites, The, 84, 91–2; *Au son des Cloches . . .*, 230; *Cléo*, 218; *Contes des Grandes Mères*, 92; *Documents Décoratifs*, 230, 244, 261, 288, 296, 327, 344; *Figures Décoratives*, 230, 261, 276, 299, 301, 302, 327; History of Germany, 114–15, 248; History of Spain, 220; *Ilsée*, 170, 173–4; lettering for 'Book of Letters', *facing page* 216; 'Lord's Prayer, The', 231, 296, 327, 330; Manuel's Poems, 128; *Mr Brouček* frontispiece, 17; *Mémoires d'un Eléphant Blanc*, 150

Buildings, Murals & Sculpture: German Theatre (interior), 334–5; Pavilion for World Exhibition, 231–2; Prague Municipal Building, 335–7; Houbigant Statue, 234

Jewellery & Fashion: Butterfly with Tiffany wings, 288, *facing page* 328; engagement ring for Maruška, 300; fashion designs, 293, 326

Murals: Emmahof (for Count Khuen), 38, 49, 71; Jerusalem (sketches only), 301; 'Slav Epic', 232; South Slav, 232

Panneaux: 'Four Arts', 251; 'Four Flowers', *between pages* 144–5; 'Four Precious Stones', 245; 'Four Seasons', *facing page* 89, 170, 171; 'Four Stars', 245; fruit (for the crémerie), 91, 177; 'Petronius and Eunice', 275; Réjane (for a ball), 309, 310; soap box, 327

Periodicals & Newspapers: American: Century Magazine, 299, 328, 344; Colliers, 344; Hearsts, 344; Ladies Home Journal, 344; Lippincott's, 344; Town Topics, 326. *French:* Costume au Théâtre, 113, 128; Figaro, 113; Gaulois, Le, 305; Illustration, 113; Illustré, 113; Paris, Illustré, 280; Petit Français Illustré, 109, 113; La Plume, 115, 170, 172, 183, 185, 186, 191; Revue Marme, 113; Vie Populaire, La, 91, 113

Pictures: Calendar (La Plume), 170; 'Madonna of the Lilies', 301, 315, 318, 327; 'Quo Vadis', 327

Portraits: Archbishop Farley, 298, 299, 315, 318, 367, 373 (unfinished); Frances Leatherbee, 352, 363 (un-

finished); Head of Maruška 267; Mrs R. de Wissman, 296; Sarah Bernhardt, 129; 'Slavia', 352
Posters (B. indicates a Bernhardt production): *Aiglon, L'*, B. 242; *Amants, Les* (Donnay), 170; 'Cigarillos' (Madrid), 220; *Dame aux Camélias, La*, B. 134, 180; *Gismonda*, B. 126, 133, 145–6, 167, 170, 248; 'Job', 244, 298; *Lorenzaccio*, B. 141, 180; *Maid of Orleans* (Frohman/Adams), 342–3; *Médée*, B. 136, 247, 290; 'Nestlé's Food' (London), 148; *Passion* (Haroucourt), 276; *Samaritaine, La*, B. 194; *Secret Service* (draft B.), 194; *Tosca*, B. 194; *Trappistine* type, 195; 'Waverley Cycles' (London), 148; 'West End Revue' (London), 148
Stage Design & Production: Dame aux Camélias, La, 134; *Kassa* (Carter), 338–41; *Maid of Orleans* (Frohman/Adams), 342–3; *Princesse Lointaine, La*, 147
Mucha, Amalie, 3, 4–5, 48
Mucha, Andreas, 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 15, 19, 21, 22, 23, 26, 48, 297
Mucha, Angela, 5, 48
Mucha, Anna, 5, 40, 48, 191, 192, 322, 325, 355, 356
Mucha, Antonia, 4, 48
Mucha, August, 4, 48
Mucha, Maruška (*née* Chytilová, *q.v.*), of great help to M., 330; warns him about deceiving himself, 334–5; gives birth to daughter, 343; sees Lord Mayor on M.'s behalf, 357, 358; takes M. to task, 367
Munkacsy (painter), 59, 91
Murger, 72, 82
Musset, Alfred de, 180, 266

'Nabis, Les', 69–70, 90, 99
Nadar (photographer), 182
Nancy, Gallé, 215
Natzmar, Colonel von, 63
Nesbit, Evelyn, 312
Nesvadba, 16
Ney, Marshal, 75
Nichols, Revd Dr, 312
Nickerson family, 334, 351
Nietszche, 153, 266
Nikola of Montenegro, King, 364, 365, 374
Nordau, Max (writer on art), 217
Normand, Charles, 214, 215
Novotná, Mařka (childhood friend of M.), 14
Novotný, J. V. (M.'s schoolmaster), 3
Nuger, Antonin (student), 119
Nüll, Van der, 30

Offenbach, Jacques, 59
Orival, d', 110
Oumiroff (musician), 276, 302, 305
Overbeck (painter), 278

Pack, Nina, 122
Palmer, Mrs Potter, 276, 292, 374
Papus (occultist), 162
Pasternak (painter), 46
Pasteur, Louis, 128, 202
Patry, Mme (actress), 138, 141
Payer (painter), 38
Peeters (Texas oil king), 284
Peixoto, Ernest (illustrator), 316
Péladan, Sâr (occultist), 65, 96
Pennfield, 286
'Père-la-Pudeur', *see* Béranger, Senator
Persia, Shah of, 243
Piazza (publisher), 167, 175, 231, 249
Picabia, 372
Picasso, Pablo, 92, 372
Pickford, Mary, 369
Pierné, Gabriel (composer), 181
Piloti (academician), 41
Pissaro, 66
Plessis, du, 110
Podkovinsky, 91
Poincaré, Henri, 182, 202, 208, 209
Polívka (architect), 355
Porel (Réjane's husband), 156
Porel, Miss, 309
Pott, Professor, 41
Potter, Miss (sculptress), 342
Poubelle (prefect of Police), 56
Pozyn, Cardinal, 78
Procházková, Ančka (school friend of M.), 14
Prout, Father, 297, 298, 299
Przesmycky, 91

Rajmund the Cobbler, 15
Rambosson, Ivanhoe, 115
Rampolla, Cardinal, 78
Ranjitsinhji, Prince, 343
Ranson (painter), 55, 99, 287
Raynaud, E., 110
Reade, Brian, 131
Rebell, Hugues, 110
Rechner (jeweller), 300
Rector (restaurateur), 315
Redon, Odilon (painter), 372
Redonnel, Paul, 10, 186, 187
Reed, Ethyl, 286

Régnier, Henri de (poet), 157
Reinhardt, Max, 129
Réjane, 142, 144, 156, 195, 308, 310, 311
Remunda, Mrs Jan, *see* Mucha, Angela
Renan, Ary (painter), 180, 249
Renard, Jules (critic), 242
Renoir, 66, 101, 107
Richardson, Mrs Frederick, 328
Robida (caricaturist), 238, 240, 241
Rochas, Colonel de, 201, 202, 203, 253
Rochefort, 215
Rochegrosse, 114, 248
Rockefeller family, 284
Rodin, 65, 197, 215, 218, 245, 253, 255, 266, 361, 363, 372
Ronsard, 94
Roosevelt, Miss Alice, 313
Roosevelt, Theodore, 319
Rossi, Carmen, 195, 196
Rostand, Edmond, 137, 138, 142, 147, 167, 181, 182, 194, 215, 221, 241, 242, 341–2
Rothschild, Baron Solomon, 182, 228, 262
Rothschild, Baroness, 262, 263, 275, 276, 282, 290, 291, 302, 303–4
Rouault, 372
Roussel (painter), 55, 287
Ruf (woodcutter), 91
Ruskin, John, 3
Ruty (disciple of M.), 150, 151
Ryder, Albert (artist), 285

Sádová, 11
Saint Claire (critic), 174
Salis de Saglie, André, *see* Bibi la Purée
Sandor (painter), 91, 92
Sanger, Mrs Margaret, 370
Sansbœuf (Mayor), 249
Santos-Dumont (air pioneer), 224–30
Sarcey, Francisque, 156, 157, 242
Sardou, Victorien, 127, 128–9, 142, 181, 195, 252
Schmidt, Anna Seaton, 347, 348
Schratt, Katharina, 78
Schwab family, 263, 331, 333, 351; house and organ, 332–3
Schwab, Charles M., 314–15, 332
Schuré, Eduard, 96, 215, 250
Schwertner (painter), 91, 92
Scott, Captain, 374
Seignobos, Professor Charles, 114, 115, 171, 247
Sembrich, Marcella (singer), 327
Sérusier (painter), 55, 65, 67, 68–9, 90, 95, 96, 99, 101, 163, 175, 287
Seurat, 372
Seysses (sculptor), 179, 180, 234, 362
Siamour, M. et Mme, 201
Siamour, Mlle (sculptress), 180
Siccardsburg (architect), 30
Šimáček (publisher), 84
Simon, Jules, 128
Sipido (assassin), 243
Slavíček, 279
Slewinski (painter), 88, 90, 91, 98, 116, 123, 154, 176, 177
Smetana, Bedřich, 279, 333
Sonday, Paul, 110
Spitzweg (Academician), 41
Správková, Miss, 276
Srb (Lord Mayor of Prague), 355
Stantejský, Julek (school friend of M.), 18, 19, 20, 82
Stein, Eliot, 192
Steinlen (artist), 113
Stephanie, Princess, 77, 253
Stoked, Mr & Mrs W. E. D., 314
Straširybka, Jan (painter), 38
Strauss, Johann, 29, 31
Strindberg, August, arrives at the crémerie, 152; character and background of, 152, 153; described by M., 154; stays with M., 154–5; their interest in occultism, 155, 159; dramatic career of, 156; helped by Antoine, 156; does not help himself, 157–8; 'arrives' at wrong time, 157–8; experiments of, 158, 159; autobiographical account by, 159; injuries of, 158, 159; enjoys cemeteries, 160; tries to catch spirits, 160, 161; not thought mad by friends, 162; helped by Gauguin, 162; mocked by the public in Paris, 162; becomes suspicious of associates, 163; borrows from Mme Charlotte, 163; writes play based on the crémerie, 163, 176; mental state of, declines, 163; and 'no more love', 163–4, 185; has persecution mania, 164; and Fate, 163, 164, 165, 173; and Mme Charlotte, 163, 176; leaves the crémerie, 165, 175; is repatriated, 161, 166; portrait of, by Slewinski, 177
Sullivan, Louis (architect), 285, 352
Sun Yat-Sen, 350
Svoboda (painter), 297, 325
Sweert-Špork, Countess, 99
Sylvestre, Armand, 142, 181

Tabouret, 110
Tadéma, Alma (painter), 284
Taft, President, 350
Tailhède, la, 110
Tanguy, Père, 68, 90
Terš, Professor, 264
Testu-Masson (painter), 83
Thaw, Harry K., 312
Theer, Otakar (poet), 265
Theuriet, André (writer), 181
Thiery (bookseller), 34
Thorne, Mrs James Ward, 292
Tiffany, 285, 286, 287, 326, 372
Tissot, James (painter), 162
Titian, 331
Tolstoy, Leo, 217, 349
Tonder, Dr, 322
Toulouse-Lautrec, 75, 107, 122, 132, 217, 287

Umberto I of Italy, King, 243
Umlauf (painter), 20
Unger Bros. (Silversmiths), 344
Úprka (painter), 46, 255

Vácha (painter), 87, 109, 116
Vaillant (assassin), 119
Valday, Mme (actress), 141
Valoton (painter), 287
Vanderbilt family, 263, 282, 284, 312
Vanderbilt, Mrs Cornelius, 291
Velde, Van de, 148, 215
Verkade, W., 99, 100, 101
Verlaine, 59, 68, 94, 109, 110, 111, 266
Verne, Jules, 246
Vetsera, Baroness, 77, 78–9
Vever (artist), 246
Vicaire, 110
Victoria of England, Queen, 148, 243
Vinci, Leonardo da, 247
Vitoušek, Mme (M.'s fortune-teller), 303-4
Viviani (socialist leader), 179, 218
Vochoč (painter), 252
Vogler (painter), 287
Vollard, 69, 122, 123
Vollberger (M.'s music teacher), 15, 24, 25
Voltaire, 260

Vuillard (painter), 55, 287

Wagner, Richard, 42, 65, 217, 271
Waldeck-Rousseau, 182
Wales, Prince of, 243
Ward, Genevieve, 143
Washington, George, 1
Whistler, James, 285, 286; at Académie Carmen, 117, 195, 196; as friend of Symbolists, 196; joins forces with M., 196; character and foibles of, 196; and Rodin, 197; puritanism of, 197; sarcasm of, 198, 199; is no teacher, 198; is anti-English, 198; admires aristocracy, 199; criticizes M., 199; real affinity with M., 199, 200; and spiritualism, 200; fears death, 200; loses his pupils, 200; dies in 1903, 200
White, Stanford (architect), 285, 309, 312
Widhopf, 46, 64, 117, 250, 362
Wilczek, Count Hans, 38, 39
Wilde, Oscar, on *Zaza*, 142; as Bernhardt's confidant, 142–3; and Whistler, 198; comforted by Bernhardt, 243; end of, 243
Wildenbusch, Ernst (playwright), 335
Wilhelm I of Germany, Kaiser, 47, 63
Wilhelm II of Germany, Kaiser, 63, 64, 237
Willette (artist), 218
Williams, Roger, 352, 359
Wilson, Edward A. (artist), 344, 345
Wilson, Woodrow, 350, 352
Wispiansky (actor), 90, 175
Wissman, Mrs de R., 291, 296
Wittelsbach family, 41
Wolf, Elsie de, 291, 370
Wright, Frank Lloyd (architect), 285
Wright, Orville, 260

Zaoral, Abbot, 369
Zelený, Professor, 22, 23
Ženíšek, 115, 193, 252, 300
Zenon, 91
Zola, Émile, 112, 158, 179, 194, 217, 218, 221
Zukor, Adolf, 373

RITTER LIBRARY
BALDWIN-WALLACE COLLEGE

B
M942m

Date Due

Demco 38-297

N
6838
.M8
M79

Mucha, Jiri

Alphonse Mucha - his life and art

BALDWIN-WALLACE COLLEGE
B013467BWC